DOCTORAL THESIS

Growing sideways

challenging boundaries between childhood and adulthood in twenty-first century Britain

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Award date:
2019

Awarding institution:
University of Roehampton

Growing Sideways:

Challenging Boundaries Between Childhood and Adulthood in Twenty-First Century Britain

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of PhD

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University of Roehampton

2018

Snail human by author, 2018

Abstract

This thesis examines changing boundaries between childhood and adulthood in twenty-first century British society and culture through the concept of growth in order to investigate alternatives to conventional ideas of growing up. It is the first in-depth academic study to consider growing sideways as a distinct and important discourse that challenges, and provides an alternative to, the discourse of upwards growth, previously identified as a pervasive grand narrative that privileges adulthood (Trites, 2014). The thesis demonstrates that twenty-first century Britain is a particular historical and socio-cultural moment at which boundaries between childhood and adulthood are widely debated, policed, and contested. Building on usages of the phrase growing sideways in Shane Meadows's film and television cycle *This Is England* (2006–2015) and Kathryn Bond Stockton's study *The Queer Child or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century* (2009), and on pre-existing terminology and theories around non-normative growth, this thesis develops growing sideways as a concept that queers the grand narrative of upwards growth by destabilising childhood and adulthood, and the boundaries between them. This concept is refined and complicated through close readings of twenty-first century British children's literature, television series, film, and participatory events, focusing on three conceptual areas in turn. First, the thesis explores how, because appearance is a flawed signifier of age, bodily and vestimentary boundaries between childhood and adulthood are transgressed through passing and cross-dressing. Second, the thesis argues that conventional behavioural and attitudinal boundaries between childhood and adulthood are broadly and prominently challenged through play, particularly performative role play and playfulness as a long-term attitude. Third, the thesis considers endeavours that seek resistance to, and release from, containment within spatial boundaries between childhood and adulthood, which are shaped by power structures biased, through the grand narrative of growth, towards adulthood. Investigating these age boundaries around appearance, play, and space, the thesis traces growing sideways as an emerging structure of feeling (Raymond Williams, 1977) and explores strategies of sideways growth.

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Acknowledgements

I heartily thank my supervisors Dr Lisa Sainsbury, Dr Alison Waller, and Dr Jane Suzanne Carroll for their patience, advice, analogies, encouragement, and, most importantly, for believing in me even when I could see neither trees nor forests.

I am cheerfully indebted to my PhD colleagues Nick Campbell, Erica Gillingham, Nick Lavery, Emily Mercer, Sinéad Moriarty, Sarah Pyke, Denise Saul, and Kay Waddilove who, between them, have read jumbled words and given clarifying feedback, sometimes with lightning speed turnaround; semaphored confidence through fog and rain; and provided actual and virtual hugs, high fives, cups of tea, and a room of my own (with cheering squad) for the final writing months. Here's to the mighty power of the 45s, office dancing, and chai! You have been the best support and distraction a snail could have.

I am also grateful to my friends outside the PhD room, especially Tina Raspe, Julia Kunz, Daniel Roß, Guy Farber, and Teresia Fant, whose messages, visits, vegetable gifts, and invitations reminded me that there is a world out there.

To my lovely parents, thank you for letting me run away to London again, always picking up the phone, sending me postcards and parcels, and forever keeping Moomin duvet covers ready for me.

Finally, I want to thank Nick Lavery for kitchen adventures, jellyfish hugs, everyday silliness, all the bright lights and keeping me sane(ish).

♥

List of Abbreviations

Big Kids **(2000)** CBBC		Writ. Lucy Daniel Raby
E2	"Kate Avoids Friends" (4 Oct. 2000)	
Crashing **(2016)** Channel Four		Writ. Phoebe
E4	"Episode Four" (1 Feb. 2016)	Waller-Bridge
Doctor Who **(2010–2013)** BBC One		
S5E1	"The Eleventh Hour" (3 Apr. 2010)	Writ. Steven Moffat
S5E5	"Flesh and Stone" (1 May 2010)	Writ. Steven Moffat
ConS5E13	"*Doctor Who* Confidential: Out of Time" (26 Jun. 2010)	
Fleabag **(2016–present)** BBC Three		Writ. Phoebe
S1E5	"Episode Five" (18 Aug. 2016)	Waller-Bridge
Miranda **(2009–2015)** BBC Two		
S1E1	"Date" (9 Nov. 2009)	Writ. Miranda Hart
S1E3	"Job" (23 Nov. 2009)	Writ. Miranda Hart, & James Cary
S2E1	"The New Me" (15 Nov. 2010)	Writ. Miranda Hart
S3E3	"The Dinner Party" (7 Jan. 2013)	Writ. Miranda Hart
SP2	"The Final Curtain" (1 Jan. 2015)	Writ. Miranda Hart
Some Girls **(2012–2014)** BBC Three		Writ. Bernadette Davis
S1E3	"Episode Three" (20 Nov. 2012)	
The Sparticle Mystery **(2011–2015)** CBBC		
S1E1	"The Disappearance" (14 Feb. 2011)	Writ. Alison Hume
S1E2	"The Invasion" (15 Feb. 2011)	Writ. Alison Hume
S1E4	"The Quest" (17 Feb. 2011)	Writ. Debbie Moon

Thirteen **(2016)** BBC Three		Writ. Marnie Dickens
E5	"Episode Five" (27 Mar. 2016)	
This Is England **Television Series (2010–2015)** Channel Four		Writ. Shane Meadows, & Jack Thorne
S1E1	"Episode One" (7 Sept. 2010)	
S1E2	"Episode Two" (14 Sept. 2010)	
S1E3	"Episode Three" (21 Sept. 2010)	
S2E1	"Episode One" (13 Dec. 2011)	
S2E2	"Episode Two" (14 Dec. 2011)	
S2E3	"Episode Three" (15 Dec. 2011)	
S3E1	"Spring" (13 Sept. 2015)	
S3E2	"Summer" (20 Sept. 2015)	
S3E3	"Autumn" (27 Sept. 2015)	
S3E4	"Winter" (4 Oct. 2015)	
Uncle **(2014–2017)** BBC Three		Writ. Oliver Refson, & Lilah Vandenburgh
S2E3	"Last Place Hero" (24 Feb. 2015)	

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Introduction:
Structures of Feeling Growth

On 23rd September 2011, a group of 228 experts, among them children's author Philip Pullman and Richard House from the University of Roehampton's Research Centre for Therapeutic Education, published an open letter in *The Telegraph* to express their concern about "the erosion of childhood in Britain" ("Erosion of Childhood", n.pag.). The signatories position this erosion as a specifically British phenomenon by referring to a report that found Britain to have lower levels of child wellbeing than twenty other economically advanced countries, such as Sweden, and comparatively considerably poorer ones, such as Greece and Poland (Unicef, 2007, p. 2). Listing "increasing commercial pressures", an earlier start in formal education, and spending more time on screen-based activities indoors than outdoor activities as causes for childhood's "erosion", the signatories state that "[i]t is everyone's responsibility to challenge policy-making and cultural developments that entice children into growing up too quickly" ("Erosion of Childhood", 23 Sept. 2011, n.pag.). A similar open letter had been published in the same newspaper on 12th September 2006, signed by 110 experts, then also including other prominent children's authors such as Jacqueline Wilson and Michael Morpurgo alongside Pullman. The 2006 signatories "are deeply concerned" for children's wellbeing and mental health, arguing that it is part of "a complex socio-cultural problem" in the twenty-first century: "[s]ince children's brains are still developing, they cannot adjust – as full-grown adults can – to the effects of ever more rapid technological and cultural change" ("Modern Life Leads to More Depression Among Children", 12 Sept. 2006, n.pag.). Understanding children as less capable than adults, they assert that children need to be protected from

such changes, which include starting formal education increasingly early, test-driven curricula, "market forces" that push children "to act and dress like mini-adults", and being exposed to unsuitable material via electronic media (n.pag.). Both open letters identify and criticise the same causes of changing childhoods, observing that aspects of adulthood are intruding on childhood in terms of pressurised environments, behaviour, clothing, and access to information. However, the 2011 letter transforms the 2006 concern that such an intrusion is detrimental to children's wellbeing into a warning that childhood itself, as a conceptual category, is at risk by focusing on the "erosion" of the idea of "childhood". The 2011 letter has more than twice as many signatories as the 2006 letter and a 2011 survey of over 1,000 parents of varied backgrounds for the Department for Education indicated that similar observations are being made on a personal level, for 88 per cent of the questioned parents consider their children to be "under pressure to grow up too quickly" ("Almost 9 out of 10 Parents", 11 Apr. 2011, n.pag.). While the signatories' concerns are heterogeneous, this increasing sense of urgency from the 2006 to the 2011 open letter is symptomatic of a wider conversation in twenty-first century Britain around conventional boundaries between childhood and adulthood blurring.

Ideas of childhood and adulthood, as I will demonstrate in this thesis, depend on each other for their definition and, therefore, changes in the former affect the latter. Hence, alongside the discourse of adulthood intruding on childhood, contributed to by the open letters, there is a discourse of childhood intruding on adulthood. Examples of the latter discourse, and its links with the former, can be traced across British society. In a speech on 11th April 2005, then Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams describes British society as "a debased environment of gossip, inflated rhetoric, non-participation, celebrity obsession, and vacuous aspiration" (2005, p. 380), where children are targeted by advertising (p. 382) and "an educational philosophy that is obsessed with testing" (p. 383). Instead of raising children to become adults, such a society "produce[s] grown-up infants"

(p. 286). His speech implies that blurring age boundaries also affect the conceptual category of adulthood and that its meaning has become uncertain, for Williams thought it necessary to provide an explicit definition of adulthood, a list of "marks of maturity, or having grown up as a human being", which includes being "aware of emotion but not enslaved by it" and "sensitive to the cost of the choices they make" (p. 380). In a 2014 article in *The Guardian*, David Webster, lecturer in religion, philosophy, and ethics at the University of Gloucestershire, criticises effects of technological developments on adulthood. Webster condemns adults who use emojis as "linguistic[ally] incompeten[t]" and typical of "a cultural trend that is at the very least rather annoying: a refusal of adults to act like grown-ups" (18 Jun. 2014, n.pag.). Where the open letters perhaps underestimate children's abilities to cope with technological changes, resist marketing ploys, and navigate electronic media, Webster conflates adults' usage of emojis with a rejection of "responsibility for shaping the world", facetiously concluding that "[n]o amount of winking smileys can make up for, say, a refusal to fight injustice, or face up to climate change" (n.pag.). Sociologist Frank Furedi, one of the most insistent commentators on the matter of childhood intruding on adulthood, criticises "the infantilisation of our culture" (24 Aug. 2006, n.pag.) and "the project to extend childhood" (7 Mar. 2013, n.pag.) in a series of articles over the first two decades of the millennium. He argues that, through participatory events such as school discos for adults, "London has become a magnet for young men and women determined to relive their childhoods" (29 Jul. 2003, n.pag.); that university students are prevented from becoming independent and responsible by overbearing staff and parents (7 Mar. 2013, n.pag.); and that new commodities such as colouring books specifically targeted at adults "infantilis[e] everyday life" (31 Aug. 2015, n.pag.). Furedi describes adults who fly kites, read children's books, move out of their parents' homes later than previous generations, and play video games as "case[s] of arrested development" (24 Aug. 2006, n.pag.). As "contemporary culture finds it difficult

to draw a line between adulthood and childhood", it "only feebly affirm[s]" conventional adult traits such as "[m]aturity, responsibility and commitment" and, therefore, he argues, adulthood is "gradual[ly] empt[ied] out" and becoming less desirable (Furedi, 29 Jul. 2003, n.pag.). Williams's, Webster's, and Furedi's comments on adulthood share a sense of apprehension and disapproval, the idea that something valuable is in the process of being lost, with the signatories of the open letters's comments on childhood. The examples from these interlinked discourses around childhood and adulthood suggest a widely held notion that age boundaries are blurring, that conventional discursive ideas of both childhood and adulthood are changing, and that this is a negative development to be rectified in order to maintain traditional ideas of growing up from childhood into adulthood. I am interested in a paradigmatically different discourse, one that unsettles binaries and boundaries rather than policing them.

Anxiety around blurring age boundaries translates into anxiety around growth as concerns about changes in, for example, behaviour, clothing, and activities are articulated through concerns about brain development, mental wellbeing, feelings, responsibility, linguistic skills, and arrested development. Children are perceived to be growing up at the wrong speed, and adults are reprimanded for not growing up entirely, permanently, or at all. This relationship between age boundaries and growth, at a socio-cultural moment when discursive ideas about both are evolving and certain representations of them as uncertain are coming to the fore, is the starting point for my thesis. Whereas the open letters and other indicators of anxieties around blurring age boundaries present one perspective on age and growth, I aim to demonstrate alternative perspectives in twenty-first century British culture. My thesis investigates instances of blurring age boundaries from a unique angle: as examples of growing sideways, an alternative way of growing and being that disassociates from rigid age categories and potentially is as valid as growing up.

Growth in human beings is conventionally defined as a process of physical, emotional, and intellectual development whereby children become adults[1] and, thus, traverse the boundaries between childhood and adulthood. However, growth from childhood to adulthood is also an ideologically loaded socio-cultural concept. The idea that growth is a desirable, inevitable, and upwards process has been identified as a pervasive grand narrative that privileges adulthood (Trites, 2014, p. 148). Hence, when people fail to conform to conventional ideas of age boundaries – for example the idea that colouring is a "childish hobby" (Furedi, 31 Aug. 2015, n.pag.) unsuitable for adults – their maturity may be questioned, implying that they are 'doing' adulthood wrong or have not completely grown up. As Webster's link between emojis and responsibility demonstrates, such associations are not always logical but often presented passionately. Normative ideas of growing up, such as the notion that marriage and having children are positive rites of passage whose achievement is socio-culturally expected, can be useful, giving structure and direction for attitudes and life decisions, and yet they can also, as I argue in Chapter One, be coercive, limiting, and silencing. It is important to investigate ideas of growth because, as Chris Jenks observes, growth is "the single most compelling metaphor of contemporary culture" (1996/2005, p. 6). Ideas of growth shape notions of what constitutes normative and alternative ways of being; they underpin constructions of identity categories such as age, gender, race, class, and sexual orientation; and they affect societal and cultural structures and power dynamics. As growing (up) is often perceived as a universal and significant experience, it is worthwhile to also acknowledge and explore less conventional ideas of growth that allow for multitudes of valid experiences. This is the first detailed academic study of challenges to the grand narrative of growth in the context of twenty-first century Britain.

[1] I discuss my rationale for not focusing on adolescence on pages 17-20.

My thesis examines boundaries between childhood and adulthood in twenty-first century British society and culture through the concept of growth in order to investigate alternatives to conventional ideas of growing up. In other words, my thesis traces emerging, alternative "structures of feeling" (Raymond Williams, 1977, p.132) around growth. Twenty-first century Britain is a particular historical and socio-cultural moment at which boundaries between childhood and adulthood are debated, policed, and contested in a range of texts and settings. I argue that many twenty-first century British cultural forms – I focus on children's literature, television series, film, and participatory events – reject conventional ideas of growth and explore alternatives to them. Emerging in various ways and to various degrees, these alternative possibilities of growth pluralise constructions of childhood and adulthood, and contest boundaries between them. For example, my corpus includes Shane Meadows' film and television cycle *This Is England* (2006–2015) about a gang that transcends age categories and explicitly negotiates different versions of growth; Miranda Hart's sitcom *Miranda* (2009–2015) about a playful adult; Frank Cottrell Boyce's children's novel *Cosmic* (2008) about a boy who uses his height to enter outer space as an adult; Emily Hughes's picturebook *Wild* (2013) about a girl raised by animals in a wilderness who refuses to be tamed; and the participatory events Camp Wildfire (2015–present), a festival re-imagining childhood Scouting experiences for adults, and KidZania London (2015–present), a theme park where children role-play adult occupations. Focusing on the conceptual areas of appearance, play, and space, which, I suggest, hold particular potential for challenging normative ideas of growth, I analyse this primary material and aspects of its socio-cultural context as a discourse of alternative, queer growth through my concept *growing sideways*. The phrase *growing sideways* is used both in Meadows' *This Is England* cycle and Kathryn Bond Stockton's study *The Queer Child or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century* (2009), indicating that ideas of growth are changing in popular culture and critical theory. While Meadows's cycle

employs the phrase non-academically, and Stockton's study focuses on individuals whose development is temporarily delayed due to their marginalised sexual orientations, they provide essential springboards for my thesis as a key primary text (Meadows) and a lead (Stockton) to queer theory as a particularly valuable field to draw on for my theoretical approach. Throughout my thesis, I elucidate, refine, and complicate my own concept of growing sideways, asserting that uncertainties around age boundaries and growth can be an opportunity to develop and claim alternative ways of being and growing. However, I also examine power dynamics, particularly around age and gender, to tease out how sideways growth itself, because it cannot occur in a socio-cultural vacuum, is ideologically bound and not always equally accessible to everyone. Identifying and articulating alternative narratives of growth, my concept of growing sideways is an important contribution to discourses of growth.

Discourses of Age Boundaries

The interlinked discourses about adulthood intruding on childhood and vice versa discussed above are not the only or first setting in which boundaries between childhood and adulthood have been questioned. To contextualise my study, I briefly highlight some previous discursive flashpoints at which such observations emerge, tracing anxieties around age boundaries backwards through the twentieth century.

American media theorist Neil Postman's *The Disappearance of Childhood* (1982) is a noteworthy precursor to the 2006 and 2011 open letters by British experts. Postman argues that the medium of television disturbs childhood as a conceptual category by changing structures of access to information. The medium of print, Postman asserts, separated children and adults, and their access to information, based on literacy, by

rendering adulthood "a symbolic [. . .] achievement" that requires children "to *become* adults [. . .] by learning to read" (1982/1994, p. 36, emphasis in original). In contrast, television causes age boundaries to blur because "electric media find it impossible to withhold any secrets" and "[w]ithout secrets, of course, there can be no such thing as childhood" (p. 80). In addition to increasing children's access to information, television, as "a present-centred medium", also encourages a "childish need for immediate gratification" over attentive engagement in adults (p. 113). Convinced that American culture is losing something "terribly important" (p. ix), Postman laments the resulting "rise of the 'adultified' child" and "'the 'childified' adult" (p. 126). His colleague Joshua Meyrowitz offers similar observations about the effects of the medium of television on concepts of childhood and adulthood in 1980s America in his article "The Adultlike Child and the Childlike Adult: Socialization in an Electronic Age" (1984).

Postman's criticism of television chime with concerns about children's literature raised by his British contemporary Jacqueline Rose in *The Case of Peter Pan, or, The Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (1984). Rose contends that children's literature is "a seduction" that, through "build[ing] an image of the child inside the book", "secure[s] the child who is outside the book, the one who does not come so easily within its grasp" (1984/1992, p. 2). As it is driven by "the adult [author]'s desire for the child" (p. 3), this process is characterised by an imbalance of power. This "impossible relation between adult and child" renders children's literature itself impossible (p. 1) and, at worst, is a violation of boundaries, or a "*molestation*" of "psychic barriers", between children and adults (p. 70, emphasis in original). Rose's case in point is J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* oeuvre:[2] she famously argues that Peter Pan "does not grow up, not because he doesn't want to, but because someone else [Barrie] prefers he shouldn't" (p. 3). Rose argues that, even as they

[2] Barrie first introduced Peter Pan as a character in some chapters of his novel *The Little White Bird* (1902), later published separately as *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (1906), and established him as the protagonist in the play *Peter Pan* (1904) and the novel *Peter and Wendy* (1911). Where I italicise *Peter Pan*, I refer to the overall oeuvre rather than to individual versions of the tale or to the character himself.

violate them, adults impose age boundaries that both are impossible themselves because the child they try to "secure" does not exist as such (p. 10) and make child-adult relationships impossible because they rely on an imbalanced power structure. Rose's observation that adults impose their constructions of childhood upon children for their own benefit informs a strong tradition in children's literature criticism of exploring child-adult power relationships, including "important theoretical work done in the last few decades on children's literature as a form of colonization" (Nodelman, 2010, p. 231; cf. Waller, 2010, pp. 278-279). Two implications of Rose's work are particularly pertinent to the interlinked twenty-first century discourses around childhood and adulthood, discussed above, that my thesis starts from. First, Rose's interest in "the potential problems of transgressing psychic barriers between child and adult" and "the moments of anxiety that are generated when slippage between child and adult occurs within children's literature" (Waller, 2010, p. 275) also shapes some twenty-first century anxieties around blurring age boundaries. Rose's concern with the "ruptures, structural and otherwise, that occur when the child and the adult meet at fictional and cultural sites" (Waller, 2010, p. 276) further highlights instances of rupture as rich sites for exploration. Second, Rose's notion that child-adult relationships are "impossible" implies, as Gabrielle Owen suggests by applying queer theory to Rose's text, that the categories themselves are impossible and oppressive: "[i]f childhood is understood as something entirely separate from adulthood" and denotes ignorance, innocence, and a lack of agency and desire, then the relationship between children and adults becomes "impossible because *child* is emptied so significantly of anything we might recognize as being ontologically meaningful" (2010, p. 260, emphasis in original). If, Owen proposes, children are "rendered unintelligible" (p. 262) in this way, adults are less able to notice "what is powerful, sexual, or adult about the children around us" (p. 256) and, more generally, "the lived reality of multiple, shifting, contradictory, queer possibilities" (p. 269). Acknowledging Rose's observation in this manner allows for

diverging from these rigid ideas, for "[t]o recognize that something is an ideological construction allows movement and revision within it" (Owen, 2010, p. 269). Such opening up and making visible of queer possibilities, I add, affects both childhood *and* adulthood as conceptual categories.

Rose's key primary text itself indicates another significant flashpoint at the turn of the twentieth century. Barrie's *Peter Pan* is the most iconic and relevant example, for the purposes of my research, from a considerable body of British fiction that interrogates ideas of growth as the result of what Kimberley Reynolds describes as a literary "*fin de siècle* impulse to resist the social and biological imperatives to grow up" through "the fantasy of defying or controlling time (or the effects of maturity)" (1994, p. 17, emphasis in original). This body of fiction also includes Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), and its apprehension around growth emerged at a time when concepts of childhood and adulthood were felt to be distinct rather than blurring. As Reynolds observes, nineteenth-century developments such as "distance-parenting" and industrial capitalism's focus on childhood as a distinct age category created "an exaggerated and unrealistic sense of difference between adult and child" and "the feeling that growing up involves the loss of special qualities that may never be recovered" (1994, pp. 3-5). In Barrie's fantasy, Peter, determined not to attend school, work in an office, or grow a beard (1911/2008, pp. 216-217), rejects rites of passage, spaces, activities, and appearances conventionally associated with growing up into adulthood in order to avoid growing up: "I don't want ever to be a man [. . .] I want always to be a little boy and have fun. So I ran away to Kensington Gardens" (1911/2008, p. 92). For Barrie's other child characters, growing up is inescapable and, for Wendy, who "grew up of her own free will a day quicker than other girls" (1911/2008, p. 220), even mostly enjoyable. That Wendy's upwards growth is compared with that of other girls rather than children in general implies that there are gendered patterns of growth; I explore these patterns further throughout my thesis. Peter succeeds at

controlling his growth to the extent that he neither grows physically nor dies. Although he is the exception, for "[a]ll children, except one, grow up" (1911/2008, p. 69), his refusal of upwards growth has no consequences worse than occasional, fleeting melancholy (1911/2008, p. 214). Barrie's narrator insists that "to pity" Peter more often than "now and then [. .] would be impertinence", for "he had the most splendid time" (1906/2008, p. 29). His fantasy of defying time and maturity avoids punishing its protagonist for rejecting upwards growth, indicating the appeal of fantasies of stasis at the time.

In 1990s Britain, Reynolds notes, as "the boundaries between adult and child become more and more blurred" (1994, pp. xi) socially, "[t]he refusal to grow up is no longer a dominant motif in juvenile fiction" (p. 44). Instead, children's literature is used "as a way of facilitating the maturing process and fostering independence" (Reynolds, 1994, p. xi), even "accelerat[ing] growth in trying to prepare and protect children" (Reynolds, 1994, p. 45). However, Barrie's protagonist is a popular reference point in twenty-first century anxieties around age boundaries. For example, Furedi speaks of the "Peter Pan-demonium" of arrested development, claiming that "society is full of lost boys and girls hanging out at the edge of adulthood" (29 Jul. 2003, n.pag.) and Susan Neiman, similarly noting and criticising infantilisation in *Why Grow Up? Philosophy in Transit* (2014), considers Peter Pan to be the "emblem of our times" (p. 1). In children's fiction in particular, the existence of a plethora of twenty-first century *Peter Pan* narratives suggests that fantasies about alternatives to upwards growth continue to appeal; yet, comparing one contemporary example to Barrie's Edwardian *Peter Pan* indicates that some thinking around these alternatives has changed. In Geraldine McCaughrean's children's novel *Peter Pan in Scarlet* (2006), the first official sequel to Barrie's tale, adult characters reverse their own physical, emotional, and intellectual growth through dressing up, a practice I discuss in Chapter Three, and, subsequently, can accelerate growing up into adulthood by envisioning their adult future, which I explore in my discussion of the grand narrative of

upwards growth in Chapter One. Hence, Peter is no longer a solitary exception to upwards growth. In turn, growth and mortality become possibilities for Peter: Hook nearly "st[eals] childhood away from the boy Pan" and "a strand of London fog", signifying the 'real' world beyond Neverland, brings Peter "to the edge of death" (2006, pp. 193, 221). McCaughrean's text explores alternatives to upwards growth in more ambiguous and versatile ways than Barrie, and opens these alternatives up to child characters other than Peter, and to adult characters.

My thesis, however, moves away from "Peter Pan-demonium" to explore another, less frequently mined discourse. With children's literature as my main source, I focus on primary material that, I will argue, provides new models for understanding and navigating growth, and include participatory events that test such ideas through lived experience. The key primary text for my thesis, Meadows's *This Is England* cycle, juxtaposes a discourse of 'growing up' with a discourse of 'growing sideways'. The phrase *growing sideways* is explicitly used by the protagonists, a group of children and adults that form a tight-knight gang in the Midlands. Rich in examples across my conceptual areas of appearance, play, and space, Meadows's cycle informs the entirety of my thesis. I examine its juxtaposition of discourses of growth in Chapter One and explore selected instances of sideways growth from the cycle in more depth throughout the thesis. Through its title, the cycle claims to represent England – "this is England" – and I examine this claim in relation to discourses of age. The *This Is England* cycle's detailed and versatile negotiations of growth indicate that some aspects of wider phenomena around blurring age boundaries and uncertainties around growth are unique to twenty-first century Britain. This indication is supported by the range of the primary material in my corpus, and the specific ideas it explores. While the turn of the twenty-first century is not the first time and Britain not the only place marked by anxiety around age boundaries and ideas of growth, Britain is a particularly fruitful site for investigating alternative twenty-first century ideas of growth.

Researching Sideways Growth: Research Questions and Scope

My thesis explores possibilities (and limitations) of non-normative growth, which I term sideways growth, in twenty-first century Britain. I chose this socio-cultural moment because, as I will demonstrate, it is one at which ideas of growth are being (re-)negotiated in various settings and cultural forms especially broadly, diversely, and urgently, and in specific, new forms. I develop growing sideways as a concept that allows me to identify and discuss non-normative growth, and then trace and analyse significant manifestations of this heightened activity in primary material. In Chapter One, I develop a working definition of growing sideways by drawing on existing concepts of both normative growth and alternative growth. Queer theory especially, as it is invested in exploring possibilities between and beyond normative binaries and categories, informs this working definition and my approach throughout the thesis. The primary material I select for analysis speaks to the characteristics of sideways growth that I pinpoint in this initial working definition and allows me to develop my concept further. Including a range of cultural forms from literature to participatory events, my research corpus seeks to illuminate fictional representations and lived experiences of sideways growth. For a more coherent and in-depth analysis, and to recognise reoccurring themes and shared traits, I conduct my analysis of these aspects in terms of conceptual areas. I focus on the conceptual areas appearance, play, and space because they relate to different kinds of boundaries between child and adult: bodily and vestimentary (appearance), behavioural and attitudinal (play), and spatial (space) boundaries. Growing up conventionally denotes traversing such boundaries from childhood into adulthood. Through close readings of my primary material, I explore strategies that challenge these age boundaries to signal and test sideways growth, and (re-)negotiate power structures around age and gender that may limit sideways growth. Identifying and analysing key instances in my corpus, my project demonstrates that a broad

cultural discourse of sideways growth exists, and explores the subversive potential of the conceptual areas of appearance, play, and space within this discourse.

To achieve these aims, my project is underpinned by a number of research questions. I am interested in how growth is defined and evaluated as normative and non-normative in different contexts. I consider different kinds of age boundaries and how they are imposed differently. As I will explore in Chapter Two, bodily boundaries, for example, rely on height as a signifier of age but can move unexpectedly, just as vestimentary boundaries can be transgressed, for example when adults wear onesies. In Chapter Three, I will address behavioural and attitudinal boundaries that define growing up as growing out of play. Spatial boundaries, as I will discuss in Chapter Four, can be imposed on children by adults but they can also restrict adults. Against the scaffolding of conventional expectations of upwards growth, I ask how age boundaries can be contested, traversed differently, altered, discarded, or circumvented through sideways growth. I explore how such challenges to age boundaries differ depending on conceptual area and age category, whether there are strategies for growing sideways that both children and adults can pursue, and to what extent growing sideways is possible in fictional representations and lived experience. For example, as I discuss in Chapter Three, Camp Wildfire and KidZania London, albeit both participatory play opportunities that provide special spaces for play, differ from fictional representations and from each other in how they facilitate or stifle lived experiences of sideways growth. I also ask whether – if growing up is a long-term venture that culminates in adulthood – sideways growth is a short-term or a long-term endeavour, and where it leads. Noting that growing up is a grand narrative and ideologically motivated, from which some benefit more than others, I consider whether some people are privileged in sideways growth and what circumstances or factors award such privileges. Race, class, and gender are examples of factors that can limit possibilities of sideways growth. Out of these identity categories, I focus predominantly on gender, to

enable an in-depth analysis where fruitful in close readings and to explore if power structures around gender affect possibilities of both upwards and sideways growth. Gender also is a valuable lens for examining my research corpus because it allows for synergies with the notions I draw on from queer theory.

Twenty-first Century Britain

My research focuses on twenty-first century Britain. By Britain, I mean England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, even as I acknowledge that much of my research corpus originates in England, that experiences of growth can be regionally specific, and that, for example, relevant legislation can differ across Britain. Important shifts in the twenty-first century that unsettle age boundaries in specific ways in Britain are economic, such as a housing shortage and youth unemployment. While the campaign group Defend Council Housing notes "a drastic shortage of genuinely affordable housing", the Office for National Statistics has found a twenty percent increase in the number of twenty to thirty-four-year-olds living with their parents between 1997 and 2011 (J. Hall, 17 Jul. 2012, n.pag). In 2014, 2.5 million young people were unemployed, underemployed, or overqualified for their jobs in Britain (Morris, 18 Mar. 2014, n.pag.). Unable to afford living independently and having to depend on their parents or benefits well into legal adulthood inevitably influences the growth process of young people (see "'I'd Love to Have My Own Place'", 25 Mar. 2014, n.pag.). An exclusively British millennial shift is the introduction of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, whose effect on appearance, play, and space I highlight in the respective chapters. Alongside the public discourse of anxiety discussed at the beginning of the introduction, ambitious studies of the development of millennial children, for instance Tessa Livingstone's documentary series *Child of Our Time* (2000–2013) and the Millennium Cohort Study (2000–present), indicate a national interest in contemporary growth.

The turn of the twenty-first century also, as indicated by the 2006 and 2011 open letters, coincides with significant shifts in digital and communication technologies – such as increasing internet access, and introducing smartphones, e-book readers, and an unprecedented range of social media and digital applications – that uniquely shape twenty-first century discourses of growth. As technology is a topic worth its own doctoral investigation with regard to blurring age boundaries, my thesis does not examine it in detail. I will outline relevant aspects of it here to argue that this widely experienced technological shift significantly frames the period that I analyse as a period of pluralistic possibilities for navigating age boundaries. Access to the internet provides information and communities that increase the visibility of possible transgressions of boundaries between childhood and adulthood, in ways that parallel and extend those Postman notes in relation to television. Children can gather information, for example about sexuality, and form communities, without adult mediation or interference. Children and adults can research, and access support networks around, non-normative identities, such as transgender and asexual, and non-normative life decisions such as being childfree. Furthermore, they can use the internet to circumvent traditional career paths through self-publishing, blogging, and vlogging. Watching YouTube tutorials or free online lectures share knowledge and skills, which creates opportunities for transgressing age boundaries, as I discuss further in Chapter Four. Especially through social media, the internet provides its users with insights into 'onstage' and 'backstage' versions of childhood and adulthood across cultures. Meyrowitz coins the term "'onstage' view of adulthood" to describe how traditional children's books present a performance of adulthood as omniscient, calm, and collected to children, and the term "backstage (or perhaps a 'sidestage') view of adulthood" to argue that television programmes reveal adults as having doubts, anxieties, and fears, or pursuing "childish behaviours" and sexual activities (1984, p. 36). While Meyrowitz argues that it is less important what backstage adulthood is represented as and more significant that it is

shown to exist at all (p. 36), I posit that, in the twenty-first century, the contents also matter. Through social media profiles, children can glimpse both onstage and backstage versions of adulthood, and vice versa, with specific detail. Similarly, Alexandra Petri, responding to an article by A. O. Scott, explains the "death of adulthood" through "the Internet, where the primary mode of communication is the confessional", resulting in disenchantment: "We know better, now, than to think anyone has anything under control. Too many people have admitted – in GIFs or paragraphs or videos – what a frantic scramble things really are" (11 Sept. 2014, n.pag.). These insights fuel phenomena such as the twenty-first century neologism *adulting*, which I address in Chapter Three. In short, the plurality of information available encourages and enables people to explore a plurality of ways of being. With increasing visibility, alternative ways of being, and, I will argue, growing, become more widely imaginable and inhabitable.

Age

In this thesis, I use *age* as an umbrella term for both chronological age and socio-cultural, ideologically loaded, constructed age categories such as childhood and adulthood. The grand narrative of upwards growth relies on childhood and adulthood to bookend and define growth by constructing strict boundaries between them. For example, attitudinal boundaries, as I discuss in Chapter Three, discourage adults from being playful. My research focuses on these particular boundaries between childhood and adulthood rather than, for example, between childhood and adolescence, adolescence and adulthood, or adulthood and old age. Straddling the boundary between childhood and adulthood, adolescence may seem particularly relevant to research on alternatives to growing up. Therefore, I briefly want to explain why it is not a primary concern in my project.

Adolescence deserves to be researched as a category in its own right, as scholars such as Alison Waller (2008) and Roberta Seelinger Trites (2000; 2014) have shown.

Waller argues for understanding adolescence as "a liminal space" that is positioned "as 'other' to adulthood, but also as 'other' to childhood" (2008/2009, p. 6). Despite its liminality and overlaps with childhood and adulthood, adolescence is distinct from both. Precisely because it is conventionally constructed as a liminal state in between childhood and adulthood, in which elements of both may be present, in which roles are suspended and transgressions expected, adolescence is not the most useful category for my investigation of sideways growth. Adolescents' transgressions are part of acceptable normative upwards growth because adolescence (and its liminality) are understood as finite and as preparation for adulthood; adolescents are "often perceived as liminal, in transition, and in constant growth towards the ultimate goal of maturity" (Waller, 2008/2009, p. 1). As the term's Latin origin *adolescere* 'to grow to maturity' (Kennedy, 1856, p. 57) implies, adolescence inevitably leads to adulthood. Adolescents may oscillate between childhood and adulthood but must, eventually, irrevocably discard childhood in favour of adulthood.

Being the first in-depth study of sideways growth, this thesis is interested in more unexpected ways of traversing or disrupting boundaries between childhood and adulthood: children crossing into adulthood 'before their time', adults crossing into childhood, refusals to cross, and potentially eternal liminalities. Instead of excluding representations of adolescents completely, I examine them if they suggest a trajectory of eternal liminality without the goal of adulthood, such as in the *This Is England* cycle. My analysis even of these characters focuses on how they affect or are affected by the categories of childhood and adulthood. Where I use the terms *teenager* and *adolescent* in my thesis, they serve to describe individuals' chronological age; I include teenagers under the category of children much as the field of children's literature studies often includes research on young adult literature (cf. Trites, 2014, p. 12). In this focus on childhood and adulthood, I follow conventions of discussing fundamental age-specific power structures in children's literature criticism. Coining the concept of *aetonormativity* in *Power, Voice and*

Subjectivity in Literature for Young Readers (2010) to describe power imbalances in child-adult relationships, Maria Nikolajeva uses the terms *child* and *adult*, without reference to other age categories such as adolescence. As Clémentine Beauvais notes, "[t]he question of the respective statuses of adult(hood) and child(hood) in children's literature is one of the oldest, most multifarious, and conceptually richest in the field" (2017, p. 265). While stating that it is "not an exaggeration to say that thinking about the respective roles and representations of 'the child' and 'the adult' in children's literature is *the* theoretical staple of children's literature scholarship", Beauvais observes that "the former has been much more seriously analysed than the latter", as scholars have "turned a generally non-compassionate, uninterested, or hostile glance on the adult" (2017, pp. 266-267, emphasis in original). Equally interested in adulthood as in childhood, my research project seeks to contribute to recent forays, for example by Vanessa Joosen (2018), into studying adulthood through children's literature criticism.

Using the legal boundary of the chronological age of eighteen when I speak of children and adults is a reminder of crucial power imbalances between children and adults. On their eighteenth birthday, children cross the boundary from 'age of minority' to 'age of majority' and become 'legal', full members of British society. The existence of these phrases alone suggests aetonormative value judgements: being a child evokes being marginalised (in the minority) and 'less than' (illegal, even), whereas being an adult is a more secure position (in the majority, legal). The implications of this age-based difference in legal status hold beyond semantics: children and adults are granted different rights. The rights exclusively afforded to adults include suffrage, buying alcohol, smoking, getting tattooed, joining the army or marrying without parental permission, signing legal contracts, and watching films rated PG 18 ("Your Rights at 18", n.d., n.pag.). Thus, adults have privileged access to political influence, autonomous decisions, and even cultural capital. Excluding children from these rights *makes* them different: less important to listen to

because they have no direct political say and with a different set of appearances, behaviours, and spaces, depending on which activities are legally available to them. By focusing on a specific set of boundaries between childhood and adulthood, as a key site for maintaining and disrupting the grand narrative of growth, my project lays the groundwork for future research, which may explore sideways growth in relation to other age categories such as adolescence or old age.

Literature Review

As growing (up) is a universally significant, multifaceted topic relevant to a variety of discourses, I am able to draw on a range of areas. A plethora of sources provide references to concerns and uncertainties around age boundaries and growth, if often briefly or with a different focus, that help contextualise my work. Examples include Sophie Heawood's newspaper article deriding "Generation Kidulthood" as "a midlife crisis" causing "real adulthood" to be "postponed indefinitely" (7 Feb. 2015, n.pag.); Caitlin Moran's memoir-guidebook *How to Be a Woman* (2011); academic articles such as David Rudd's "A Coming or Going of Age?: Children's Literature at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century" (2014) and U. C. Knoepflmacher's "The Balancing of Child and Adult: An Approach to Victorian Fantasies for Children" (1983). Rachel Falconer's *The Crossover Novel: Contemporary Children's Fiction and Its Adult Readership* (2009) also, fleetingly, notes that age boundaries in Britain are changing around the millennium.

A small body of full-length studies on age boundaries and growth exists in literary criticism and queer theory, which my research seeks to contribute to. Claudia Nelson's *Precocious Children & Childish Adults: Age Inversion in Victorian Literature* (2012) is the only detailed study explicitly examining changing boundaries between childhood and

adulthood in British society and culture. However, her analysis of unstable age roles, cultural anxiety around the concept of adulthood, and literary types such as child-women and child-men focuses on the Victorian era. Although Nelson examines representations of age categories, she does not utilise growth as a concept or critical method. Especially pertinent to my study are Stockton's *The Queer Child or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century* (2009), which I have identified above, and Trites's *Literary Conceptualizations of Growth: Metaphors and Cognition in Adolescent Literature* (2014), which is noteworthy as a rare example of growth-specific analyses of adolescent literature that examine age-related rather than sexual aspects of identity. Trites's observation of growth as a pervasive cultural narrative is an important foundation for my work. As I discuss and develop Stockton's and Trites's ideas to establish my concept of growing sideways in Chapter One, I refrain from exploring them here. My research provides continuity for Nelson's studies by exploring related developments in the same geographical area at a different time. I expand Stockton's notion of growing sideways beyond sexual orientation, and build on queer theory throughout, particularly work by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1993), Jack (Judith) Halberstam (2005; 2011; 2014), Elizabeth Freeman (2010), Judith Butler (1990; 1993), and Sara Ahmed (2006). Furthermore, my study complements Trites's study by investigating alternatives to, and margins of, her observations on the grand narrative of upwards growth. In Chapter One, I also draw on relevant notions of growth in disciplines such as biology (Bateson, & Martin 2013), psychology (Arnett, 2000; Langer, 2009), and anthropology (Montagu, 1981; van Gennep, 1960) and on children's literature criticism that explores childhood and adulthood as categories in complex relationships with each other, for example by Peter Hollindale (1997) and Marah Gubar (2013).

In addition to contributing to, and productively interlinking, previous research on age boundaries and growth across disciplines, my research is informed by and, in turn,

aims to inform research on age, childhood, power, and gender. In *Adulthood in Children's Literature* (2018), Joosen observes that scholars of age studies, which currently is dominated by gerontology, and children's literature could benefit from considering each other's work (p. 9). Albeit with a different focus than Joosen's, my research contributes to linking these two fields and continues endeavours to open up age studies to concerns other than gerontology. Furthermore, my research draws on sociological studies of childhood such as Libby Brooks's *The Story of Childhood: Growing Up in Modern Britain* (2006), Jenks's *Childhood* (1996), and Nick Lee's *Childhood and Society: Growing Up in an Age of Uncertainty* (2001). I examine some of the phenomena pinpointed by Brooks, Jenks, and Lee, such as the effect of James Bulger's murder in 1993 on ideas of childhood, in different ways, by focusing on childhood *and* adulthood through the prism of alternative possibilities of growth, and by engaging more comprehensively with fictional representations and participatory events. Building on studies of power structures, particularly the tradition of examining child-adult power relationships in children's literature criticism in the wake of Rose's *The Case of Peter Pan, or, The impossibility of Children's Fiction*, I explore what is at stake in processes of growth and how privilege shapes them. I especially investigate the concept of aetonormativity, coined by Nikolajeva (2010) and developed by Beauvais (2012; 2015) in Chapters One and Four. Utilising synergies with queer and power studies, I also focus specifically on aspects of the intersectionality of age and gender. My approach is especially inspired by Corinne T. Field's study *The Struggle for Equal Adulthood: Gender, Race, Age, and the Fight for Citizenship in Antebellum America* (2014), which analyses campaigns for voting rights in relation to sexism, racism, and ideas of adulthood in a different geographical, temporal, and cultural context.

Structures of Feeling: Methodology

My research project is interested in a particular, contemporary socio-cultural moment and a variety of cultural forms. Therefore, it is informed by methods in the tradition of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, which, founded in 1964, was "one of the first academic bodies to take 'mass' culture – pop music, television programmes, fashions – seriously" ("The Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies Project", n.d., n.pag.). The centre operates at intersections of, for example, literary criticism, media studies, sociology, and anthropology; I draw especially on work by Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall. Approaching twenty-first century Britain through Williams's concept of culture as a "whole way of life" (1989, p. 3) allows me to examine a range of social and political phenomena and a variety of cultural forms, such as children's literature, television, and participatory events, in order to identify manifestations of growing sideways in representations and lived experiences. Instead of exclusively focusing on literary texts, I analyse these cultural forms within their socio-cultural contexts as "cultural practices" (S. Hall, 1997/2003, p. 3) that contribute to alternative "structures of feeling" (Raymond Williams, 1977, p.132) around ideas of growth in twenty-first century Britain.

The notion of cultural practices, by underlining that meanings are produced and altered within contexts, enables me to ask how strategies for sideways growth might operate. Understanding culture as "a process, a set of *practices*" (1997/2003, p. 2, emphasis in original), Hall argues that meaning is produced in personal and social interactions and "whenever we express ourselves in, make use of, consume or appropriate cultural 'things'; that is, when we incorporate them in different ways into the everyday rituals and practices of daily life" (p. 3). In my chapters on appearance, play, and space, I explore cultural, or "signifying practice[s]" (S. Hall, 1997/2003, p. 5) in relation to bodies,

clothes, activities, and environments. Inspired by Ruth Benedict's 1934 *Patterns of Culture*, Raymond Williams defines *structures of feeling* as "a particular quality of social experience and relationship, historically distinct from other particular qualities, which gives the sense of a generation or of a period" (1977, p. 131). As his methodology analyses such qualities "as social experience" instead of dismissing them as "'personal' experience or as the merely superficial or incidental 'small' changes of society", Williams chooses the word *feeling* "to emphasize a distinction from more formal concepts of 'world-view' or 'ideology'" (pp. 131-132). While "formally held and systematic beliefs" must be considered, he is "concerned with meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt, and the relations between these and formal or systematic beliefs are in practice variable" (p. 132). Accordingly, structures of feeling are not fixed phenomena but "still in process" and "a cultural hypothesis" (p. 132). Arguing that art and literature often give the first indications that new structures are forming, Williams "defin[es] forms and conventions in art and literature as inalienable elements of a social material process" (p. 133). I agree with Ben Highmore who argues that Williams's structures of feeling is a useful concept in the "'the affective turn'" in human and posthuman sciences because it allows for conceptualising "feelings and tastes as agents of history and as form-giving social forces" and studying "more ubiquitous forms of material culture such as clothing, housing, food, furnishings and other material practices of daily living" (2016, pp. 144-145), and thus counters "the atomising effects of disciplinary specialisation" (p. 148). Examining alternative practices around appearance, play, and space in a particular period, I will argue that growing sideways is an emerging, alternative structure of feeling in twenty-first century Britain and map characteristics of it. Each chapter will illuminate this structure of feeling from its own perspective, through tracing how alternative cultural practices alter affective and other meanings of bodies, clothes, behaviours, attitudes, and spaces.

Research Corpus

In order to address my research questions, which are multifaceted, my research corpus is diverse. Selecting a range of cultural forms allows me to trace sideways growth across contexts, demonstrating that it is a broad cultural phenomenon, and explore meaningful connections between cultural forms. To examine a reasonable range of cultural forms, I focus on children's literature, television series, film, and participatory events. While other cultural forms such as music, games, and online content, for example on YouTube, also offer rich material for exploration, my selected cultural forms are particularly relevant to this thesis. Children's literature provides my main source, for it is invested in representing growth and is a key site where children and adults negotiate boundaries between childhood and adulthood. These concerns are a result of the inherent adult-child tension in children's literature that Rose called attention to: although the field is oriented towards children, it is predominantly adults who write, publish and buy works of children's literature for (implied) child readers. Children's literature has both been conceptualised as a cultural form that emphasises, even where it violates, boundaries between children and adults (Rose, 1984), and as a more lenient meeting point for children and adults (Hollindale, 1997). It remains among the first cultural forms that children actively and avidly consume, is increasingly openly appreciated by adults for their own reading pleasure (see Falconer, 2009; cf. Walter, 19 Sept. 2014, n.pag.; Hahn, 20 Mar. 2015, n.pag.), and can provide shared reading experiences for children and adults. I particularly focus on novels and picturebooks to cover a range of target audiences and formal possibilities. I also analyse a short story by Mick Jackson and a novel by Mick Kitson that, while they focus on child protagonists and add invaluable perspectives to my discussion, are not marketed at children. Both, however, ambiguously hover around the outskirts of children's literature. Jackson's short story collection *Ten Sorry Tales* (2005), reminiscent of Edward Gorey's work, has been positioned as a children's book by author Jem Poster in a review in *The*

Guardian: "*Ten Sorry Tales* is a children's book which its publisher – presumably with some faint hope of crossover success – has chosen to market as though it weren't" (30 Jul. 2005, n.pag.). In turn, Kitson's novel *Sal* is narrated by a thirteen-year-old and was written because Kitson felt frustrated by the novels he taught as an English teacher at an independent school in Fife: "I was going to write a novel that I would want to read" (Skidelsky, 14 Jan. 2018, n.pag.). Furthermore, Kitson based his protagonists on girls he met while working at comprehensive schools (Skidelsky, 14 Jan. 2018, n.pag.) and Canongate created an animated book cover for *Sal* that evokes publishers' trailers for children's books ("*Sal* by Mick Kitson – Animated Cover", n.d., n.pag.).

Television series are pertinent to my research because they are pervasive and culturally influential reference points, and because the medium of television has been theorised as blurring age boundaries in positive and negative ways (Postman, 1982; Meyrowitz, 1984; Scott, 14 Sept. 2014). Written, produced, and broadcast coherently over time, television series offer valuable insights on a particular cultural atmosphere during a particular period. Consisting of several episodes or series, they are also able to portray characters' negotiations of growth in depth. Furthermore, sitcoms such as *Miranda* (2009–2015) are an effective testing site for exploring alternative ways of being, because they rely on stereotypes and humour. I include series aimed at adults and at crossover family audiences. As the *This Is England* cycle begins with a film, and films reach mass audiences with their storytelling like television series and children's books, I include two significant films in my analysis, *This Is England* (2006) and *Adult Life Skills* (2016).

Participatory events are important to examine because they occupy a triangulating position in between fictional representations of changing age boundaries and changes in these boundaries in socio-economic realities. Indicating that ideas of alternative growth are more than fantasies never acted upon, these events can provide lived experiences of an emerging structure of feeling. Analysing them also brings into focus commercial interests

and wider political implications. I examine participatory events in Chapter Three because, as I will argue, they are especially significant within the conceptual area of play. I discuss KidZania London (2015–present), which is predominantly aimed at children, and Camp Wildfire (2015–present), which is exclusively aimed at adults.

To survey potential primary material, I searched publishers' catalogues, academic texts, newspaper articles, online reviews, event listings, and social media platforms; and questioned booksellers and academic colleagues. Like Claude Lévi-Strauss's *bricoleur*, I "collected or retained [materials] on the principle that 'they may always come in handy'" and, subsequently, "interrogate[d] all the heterogeneous objects of which [my] treasury is composed to discover what each of them could 'signify'" (1962/1966, p. 18). I compiled a database of primary material that challenges normative ideas of childhood, adulthood, or growth. From this database, which I updated as my research progressed, I selected my research corpus according to more specific criteria. To be included in my research, the primary material had to be authored or, in the case of participatory events, arranged in Britain between 2000 and 2018 (the final year of my doctoral research), and feature at least one significant aspect of sideways growth, as identified in my initial working definition, that relates to at least one of my conceptual areas – appearance, play, and space. For example, I selected primary material that challenges the grand narrative of growth by presenting growth as avoidable, value-negative, or multidirectional. I included primary material that allows child protagonists or child participants to perform identities, inhabit attitudes, pursue activities, or enter spaces conventionally associated with adulthood and vice versa, if these endeavours are related explicitly or implicitly to alternative growth or one of my conceptual areas. Furthermore, the material in my research corpus had to be established, that is widely known and available, or strongly invested in by readers, organisers, or participants in order to show that sideways growth is a significant phenomenon that effects ideas of identity. Strong investment, especially if it is emotional,

also suggests the material's potential impact on structures of feeling. Similarly, I selected more than one text by the same author, in the cases of Boyce and David Almond, because of these authors' particular investment in exploring alternatives to upwards growth, which manifests distinctly in different texts. For example, Almond examines ideas of wilderness and wildness across his oeuvre, and I analyse such ideas in *Jackdaw Summer* (2008) in Chapter Four, and he also investigates play as a strategy for diverging from upwards growth in *My Dad's a Birdman* (2008), a text I discuss in Chapter Three. Including several texts by the same author enables me to consider growing sideways as a potentially holistic commitment by an individual, affecting their approach to more than one conceptual area.

My research project is primarily a text-based study and the main method for analysing my research corpus is close reading. However, in addition to close-reading participatory events by examining marketing strategies and reviews, I have participated in the first three instalments of Camp Wildfire. My experience of the festival informs my analysis of it implicitly; I am not conducting an autoethnographic study. Nevertheless, participating myself has allowed me to, as autoethnography seeks to, "attempt to connect the personal to the cultural" (Koobak, 2014, p. 107). Having a direct insight into relevant lived experience, even as I only draw on it indirectly, is productive when analysing potentially messy aspects of structures of feeling.

Structure

My thesis begins with one chapter establishing growing sideways as a critical method, which is followed by three chapters, each exploring sideways growth within a specific conceptual area: appearance, play, and space. Appearance, play, and space are significant sites of heightened negotiation of age boundaries and growth across primary and secondary

material, and, I will argue, are flexible concepts that hold immense potential for subverting normative ideas of growth. Furthermore, these conceptual areas interrelate productively; for example, dressing up is a playful change of appearance that can help an adult to pursue an activity associated with children, and playgrounds are of interest for sideways growth in terms of both space and play. The chapters dedicated to conceptual areas examine conventional expectations within these areas according to the grand narrative of growth, and investigate challenges to these expectations by analysing strategies for deviation. I also consider the implications and limitations of such deviation in terms of gender. To illustrate that bodily, vestimentary, behavioural, attitudinal, and spatial boundaries have been explored, and to some extent troubled, previously, I begin each of these chapters with one key precursory text before analysing the particular ways in which my twenty-first century material disturbs these boundaries. I organise my discussion of appearance, play, and space around three levels of engagement with primary material: I analyse focal material through detailed close readings, briefly highlight particular features in primary material that I situate alongside this focal material, and, wherever useful, I mention contextual material. While much of my primary material is relevant in terms of more than one conceptual area, only my key primary text, Meadows's *This Is England* cycle, is analysed at the level of focal text across chapters. This decision enables me to examine a wider range of material, and to explore continuities and connections between my conceptual areas. However, other material is alluded to across chapters at a secondary or tertiary level of engagement, where relevant, to explore a holistic commitment with growing sideways within individual texts, in addition to within authorships.

As *growing sideways* has been used as a term before but has not yet been established as a coherent critical concept, Chapter One provides a working definition of growing sideways in relation to pre-existing terminology and theory, and demonstrates the application of this concept as a unique critical method through my key primary text. I

particularly situate my concept against, and build on, notions of growth in children's literature criticism and queer theory, such as Stockton's usage of *growing sideways*. Here, I also provide a definition of *queer* and a rationale for understanding growing sideways as feeling queer. Drawing on this discussion of previous, related work, I propose elements that characterise my concept of sideways growth. I establish Meadows's *This Is England* cycle as my key primary text, and use close readings of it to illuminate each element. The elements established in this opening chapter inform my analysis of primary material in the following chapters and, in turn, are complicated by these analyses.

Chapter Two demonstrates that a basic premise for the grand narrative of growth, the idea that childhood and adulthood are discrete categories, is flawed even on the level of appearance. I use appearance to refer to the ways in which bodies and clothes can be perceived and projected. I draw on Ferdinand de Saussure's notion of signs (1959) to discuss appearance as a slippery, arbitrary signifier of age and, utilising Judith Butler's idea of the gender performativity (1990; 1993), argue that age is a performance. I analyse primary material that explores how height and items of clothing can be used to perform age differently and subversively, and suggest that appearance can be projected (chosen and performed), allowing individuals to challenge age boundaries and cross them in unexpected ways. In the process, I develop the concepts of passing (Lingel, 2009) and cross-dressing (V. L. Bullough, & B. Bullough, 1993; Flanagan, 2008) in relation to age. I assert that growth is not strictly determined by biology and argue that growing sideways can be expressed and even facilitated through appearance. I address the conceptual area of appearance first because, as a result of the slipperiness in the categorisation of children and adults even on an embodied, physical level, other aspects of the grand narrative of growth, such as behavioural and attitudinal expectations, and spatial separation, can also be challenged.

Chapter Three investigates the conceptual area of play. I focus on play behaviours and playfulness as an attitude, because, although they serve as clear conventional markers distinguishing childhood and adulthood in the grand narrative of growth, age boundaries are being challenged prominently and broadly through play, both in fiction and through participatory events. Building on Marek Spinka, Ruth C. Newberry, and Marc Bekoff's notion of play as "training for the unexpected" (2001, p. 143) and Halberstam's queer time (2005), I explore performative (role) play with age categories, particularly through an analysis of Camp Wildfire and in relation to *adulting*. Furthermore, I discuss playfulness as a (queer) way of life in selected primary material, especially for female adult characters, and as a means to create child-adult communities. Arguing that play is used to challenge preconceptions of age-appropriate behaviour and affects socio-culturally acceptable trajectories of growth by encouraging imagination, building communities, and re-framing adulthood as reversible, discardable, and playable, I elaborate on forms and degrees of sideways growth, and its limits.

Expanding on, and locating, my discussions from Chapter Two and Chapter Three, Chapter Four explores the conceptual area of space. I demonstrate that the way in which human beings move through space reflects and shapes ideas of socialisation and upwards growth. I interrogate aetonormative power structures, which perpetuate, and are perpetuated by, the grand narrative of growth, at more length in this chapter because these structures are increasingly imposed, and challenged, spatially in Britain. I explore this tension in terms of a dialectic relationship between containment and sideways movements of resistance to and release from containment. Situating my analysis in a wider culture of spatial control, including risk-averse parenting and surveillance technology, I discuss representations of resistance to containment that indicate sideways growth in captivity narratives. Building on Halberstam's notions of the wild (2014) and queer space (2005), Yi-Fu Tuan's notion of alien space (1979), and Ahmed's idea of disorientation (2006), I

also analyse primary material that finds release from containment in wilderness, wildness, and disorientating spatial practices that contest, transgress, invade, create, and claim spaces for growing sideways.

Overall, my thesis investigates bodily, vestimentary, behavioural, attitudinal, and spatial boundaries between childhood and adulthood in twenty-first century Britain to provide important insights into the academically underexplored phenomenon of changing age boundaries and uncertain growth. Contributing to thinking about the implications of current socio-cultural developments for that significant experience of growing (up), my thesis will establish growing sideways as a concept that opens up alternative ways of being and growing. My concept and my close readings of primary material in terms of appearance, play, and space will respond to existing theories and forge productive connections between them. Choosing to write my name in lower-case letters on the title page reflects my awareness of the existence of perspectives that, although I have not been able to study them in detail, are equally valid and important to research, and my conviction that growth need not be upwards, or upper case, growth. This thesis, I hope, is a kaleidoscope, turning with each chapter to different but related shape-shifting socio-cultural patterns to explore underlying structures of feeling queer in growth, and finding delight (and sometimes dread) where elements meet in unexpected combinations.

Growing Sideways

Queering the Grand Narrative of Growth

I begin my investigation of sideways growth by introducing my key primary text, Meadows's *This Is England* cycle, and its negotiations of normative and alternative growth. Set in 1983, 1986, 1988, and 1990, respectively, Meadows's film *This Is England* and its three television series sequels follow a gang in the Midlands. In *This Is England* (2006), twelve-year-old Shaun becomes a skinhead to join the gang. In *This Is England '86* (2010), the gang comes together and disintegrates as they have parties and fights, seek employment or dread promotions, and face a failed wedding, a medical emergency, and sexual assault. *This Is England '88* (2011) focuses on distances between the protagonists although, at the end of this series, the gang reunite. In *This Is England '90* (2015), the protagonists diverge on whether they prioritise family life or parties and yet, overall, maintain strong ties. Meadows's cycle is my key primary text for several reasons. It is invested in portraying British society and culture over a period of time, and its representation of Thatcherism speaks to subsequent developments in twenty-first century Britain, as I will discuss in Chapter Three and Chapter Four. Most importantly, although the *This Is England* cycle is not the only series to complicate normative ideas of growth, it, more determinedly than others, offers a valid alternative. The protagonists in Meadows's cycle, and other twenty-first century television series such as the American series *Girls* (2012–2017) by Lena Dunham and the Australian series *Please Like Me* (2013–2016) by Josh Thomas, constantly make false starts, discover dead ends, and only tentatively, if at all, achieve landmarks of adulthood, for example climbing career or property ladders, as their series progress. Titling the portrayal of adult protagonists *Girls* and *Please Like Me* already implies a questioning of normative ideas of growing up – into women, or into

independent, authoritative individuals whose identity does not, in the first instance, depend on being liked – at the core of these series. Even compared to *Girls* and *Please Like Me*, the *This Is England* cycle is unique in the extent to which such questioning occurs. As its protagonists are not exclusively white or young adults, it is more interested in diverse experiences of growth than *Girls* and *Please Like Me*. Moreover, in Meadows's *This Is England* cycle, the protagonists' monologues and dialogues explicitly establish two discourses of growth: *growing up* and *growing sideways*.

The phrase *growing sideways* first emerges in a trailer for *This Is England '86* (Meadows, 2010). The trailer consists of a slow-motion shot of the gang in a crowd of people, dancing to Wayne Smith's "Under Mi Sleng Teng" (1985), a laid-back reggae song. The gang are presented as diverse through their appearance, for the actors span chronological ages from eighteen (playing fifteen) to early fifties and more than one identity category in terms of gender and race, and their clothes and haircuts signify a variety of youth subcultures (see fig. 1). That the characters share slow-motion movements and beaming faces suggests that they are nonetheless a tight-knit community. Furthermore, they are physically tight, dancing closely in a space that they seem to have made their own – where the chronologically youngest and oldest can interact on equal footing. In a voice-over, Woody cheerfully and lovingly describes some of his fellow gang members:

> This is us, still here, still on our best behaviour. We're always on our best behaviour, see, cause we're getting older. Mature, that is the word, if you don't include the booze. Now then, that handsome young man there is me, Woody, smooching me Mrs, Lol, she's loving that. And that's her sister there, Kelly. She's like the fairy princess of the Midlands. And that's Milky, me wingman. Smell, our very own intergalactic fashion guru. Look at Gadget, his face, ain't he brilliant? And look at Shaun, look at him the way he's jumping about and acting all grown up

> and stuff. You know, this is us, this is England '86, we're all still here, we're not growing up, pal, we're growing sideways. (Meadows, 2010, 00:01)

His final statement about the gang – "we're not growing up, pal, we're growing sideways" – establishes growing sideways as an alternative to growing up, indicating that there are choices to be made in growth. Addressing the viewer confrontationally and informally, as a "pal", Woody suggests that growing sideways is in conflict with growing up and, because it is not the widely accepted version of growth, welcomes informality, implying that growing sideways can confront and, through improvisation, circumvent the strict expectations and norms of upwards growth. This informality is also reflected in the cycle's production – it relies heavily on method acting and improvisation, whereby the actors, as Joseph Gilgun who plays Woody states, became and "are a fucking gang" ("Behind the Scenes", 2010, 03:10). Growing sideways, then, evokes improvised, rather than rule-governed growth. Furthermore, Woody's "pal" suggests the familiarity of a friend or an equal (rather than speaking from the position of a subservient or delinquent other), which implies that sideways growth is as valid as upwards growth. Leading to and shaping this final statement about the gang, the dreamy slow-motion movements of the protagonists, their bright facial expressions (see fig. 1), the laid-back music, and Woody's cheerful tone of voice indicate that growing sideways is encoded not merely as an alternative, but as a positive alternative to growing up.

Growing sideways is not presented as an outright escape from all aspects of growth, for the protagonists are "getting older", growing chronologically and physically. Accordingly, growing sideways differs from growing up in other aspects. Potential traits of those who are growing sideways are provided by Woody's contradictory description of the gang. He redefines conventional notions of acceptable activities: instead of denoting restraint, politeness, and, if requested of children by adults, being quiet, *good behaviour* – "best behaviour" even – refers to the gang enjoying themselves, dancing with abandon.

Sexual awareness, a trait conventionally expected to emerge in adolescence and, therefore, associated with growing up into adulthood, is suggested through references to kissing and wingmen, but is given no priority over qualities more easily associated with childhood such as being a fairytale princess or "jumping about". Aspects of adulthood (sexual activity) are embraced alongside, rather than pursued instead of, aspects of childhood (imaginative and physical play). Being "intergalactic", rather than tied to earth and its norms, is desirable. Moreover, Woody mentions "acting all grown up", playing at growing up instead of actually growing up. This could be read as a criticism of Shaun's incompetence at growing up, yet, in the context of the gang's community spirit and the trailer's merry tone, implies an appreciation of playfulness and possibilities of performativity.[3] Therefore, growing sideways cheerfully combines conventionally contradictory elements of childhood and adulthood. The cycle itself is ambiguously situated between (legal) childhood and (legal) adulthood, for the Parental Guidance ratings for the film and the series move between the chronological ages of fifteen and eighteen, depending on episode and region (cf. "This is England", n.d., n.pag.).[4] Moreover, in contrast to a tradition of discussing individualist narratives of growth in children's literature criticism (see Meek, & Watson, 2003), this trailer also emphasises collectivity. It establishes the gang as a diverse, tight-knit community, and growing sideways as a group identity that potentially facilitates continuity between ideas of childhood and adulthood or at least allows for more ambiguous connections between them instead of suggesting that human beings must abandon childhood for adulthood. Including a range of chronological ages, males and females, white characters and a black character, the cycle further presents growing sideways as an accessible possibility for a wider range of people. While I consider

[3] I explore age performativity further in Chapter Two.

[4] When *This Is England* was rated suitable for viewers over eighteen, Meadows argued that this renders the film "unavailable to the audience it will benefit the most", for it is "as much about England in 2007 as it is about England in 1983", and succeeded in Bristol city council overturning the British Board of Film Classification's decision to allow people from the chronological age of fifteen to see it (23 Apr. 2007, n.pag.).

sideways growth also in terms of individual endeavours, this collective element will emerge throughout the thesis as I analyse my research corpus, particularly in Chapter Three and Chapter Four. Conveying its idea of growing sideways through the protagonists' clothes, hair styles, playful behaviour, and their movement in a particular space, the trailer also hints at the subversive potential of appearance, play, and space in representations of non-normative growth that I explore in this thesis.

Throughout the cycle, growing up and growing sideways are ambiguous concepts: both are positive *and* negative, depending on the context. Growing up is described as "go[ing] [. . .] to jail" when it refers to getting a job (S1E1, 07:45),[5] and only has positive connotations when redefined beyond conventional expectations of adulthood (S2E3). Growing sideways serves as a positive term for the gang's shared group identity in the trailer, and it is also used to label an attempt at "growing up fast" a negative endeavour: "You're growing into a twat. You ain't growing up, you're growing sideways." (S1E3, 24:15). I will return to these moments of ambiguity and analyse them in more detail. As much depends on contexts and perspectives, analysing growth, especially non-normative growth, requires a complex framework.

Growing sideways has critical potential beyond its meaning in Meadows's film and television cycle, and can provide such a framework. Growing sideways, I argue, can be employed to identify and express narratives of alternative, non-normative growth across cultural forms, including lived experiences, that challenge socio-cultural expectations around childhood and adulthood. To set the scene for these challenges, I first examine aspects of the grand narrative of growth. Then I situate growing sideways in a wider discourse of alternative growth by drawing on pre-exiting concepts of alternative growth across disciplines, including Stockton's usage of growing sideways in queer studies. These pre-existing ideas are springboards for developing my concept of growing sideways and

[5] Throughout the thesis, I refer to episodes of television series through shorthand; please see the list of abbreviations (pp. ii-iii) for the titles, writers, and the original broadcasting date and channel.

demonstrating its critical potential for queering growth. Building on this discussion, and considering relevant connotations of the phrase *growing sideways* and the word *sideways*, I establish a working definition for my concept of growing sideways. I illuminate each element in my definition through close readings of examples from Meadows's cycle to demonstrate my concept's application to cultural forms.

Figure 1. Still from trailer printed inside the *This Is England '86* DVD box (2010).

The Grand Narrative of Upwards Growth

In *Literary Conceptualizations of Growth: Metaphors and Cognition in Adolescent Literature* (2014),[6] Trites identifies a "cultural narrative that children will and must grow" (2014, p. 148). She arrives at this observation through tracing representations of maturation that link "cognition inviolably to embodiment, with significant epistemological, ontological, disciplinary, and cultural implications" (p. 8) in twentieth and twenty-first century American and British literature for adolescents. Noting that adolescent literature is "saturated with conceptualizations of growth that imply growth is inevitable, necessary,

[6] I discuss Trites's work at length because it is, to date and to the best of my knowledge, the most comprehensive available source on normative ideas of growth relevant to my thesis.

sometimes painful, and must lead to adulthood" (p. 20), Trites pinpoints "a cultural narrative: teenagers are required to grow" (p. 78). This narrative operates within, and beyond, the discourse of fiction, for adolescent literature "participates in an ongoing reinforcement of social norms that growth is expected of all adolescents" (p. 54). Arguing that "[w]e replicate scripts of growth to organize our own experiences of growth, to organize our understanding of other people's growth, and to help organize our society" (p. 147), Trites indicates that this narrative is a broad phenomenon in Western cultures, structuring human experiences. The particular kind of growth advocated in this cultural narrative is shaped by the conceptualisation of human growth through the spatial metaphor of growing UP. Drawing on cognitive linguistics, particularly George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's work, Trites describes *growing up* as an embodied metaphor that maps spatial experiences of physical development onto the notion of maturation: although "[w]e refer to children as 'growing up' because they literally do grow upwards in space", the term *grown-ups* refers to levels of maturity rather than height measurements, for "[w]e don't usually mean something like, 'this group of adults is physically taller than those short children'" (p. 19). However, as I will demonstrate in Chapter Two, height has a significant role in the grand narrative of growth. Growing up also incorporates other metaphors. According to Trites, the structural metaphor "GROWTH IS INEVITABLE" (p. 125) defines physical, emotional, and mental growth as a linear and unidirectional phenomenon and, as a literary metaphor, "has existed since the days of Aristotle and Ovid" (p. 127). Most importantly, *growing up* is, as Trites argues, so strongly linked to the idea that "UP IS GOOD", evident in spatial metaphors such as *to feel upbeat* and *things are looking up* which employ directions to convey positive emotions, that, in turn, "*not* growing up has negative connotations" (pp. 19-20, emphasis in original). Thus, the cultural narrative "privilege[s] metaphors in which growth is depicted in terms that are value-positive, as opposed to employing terms that are value-neutral or value-negative" (p. 148). This

emphasis on growing up, Trites concludes, is problematic, for positioning adulthood (maturity) as the goal of "a clear-cut trajectory" of growth can "devalue youth" and entail "missing other [less goal-oriented] ways of being" (p. 148). In short, the cultural narrative that Trites identifies insistently presents growth as inevitable, desirable, and upwards from childhood into adulthood. Trites chooses the term *cultural narrative* over other possible terms – "master narratives, metanarratives, dominant cultural ideologies, or even stereotypes" – to refer to "our cognitively-stored and culturally reinforced scripts about status, power, and constructed social roles" (p. 60). Developing her observations of growing up as a cultural narrative, I use the term *grand narrative of (upwards) growth* to signal that this script is coherent and distinct enough to be justifiably named "of growth", perpetuated on a *grand* scale, and presented as something so *grand* that it not only devalues youth and misses other ways of being, but devalues and misses other ways of growing.

The grand narrative of upwards growth invites these implications because it propagates a child(hood)-adult(hood) binary. Trites notes that, while "[m]aturation, of course, is no more of a binary than race is" because "people age across a spectrum throughout their lives", it is constructed as such, for "adults frequently employ discourse to transform the spectrum of aging into a binary: people can be categorized as either 'adult' or 'non-adult'" (p. 111). Children and adolescents are subsumed under the category *non-adult* much like the category *child* encompasses children and adolescents in children's literature criticism discussions of child-adult power relationships, and with similar implications for power structures. Nikolajeva's concept aetonormativity, mentioned in the Introduction, seeks to analyse imbalanced child-adult power relationships in children's literature; both within the texts themselves and between adult authors and implied child readers. Nikolajeva coins her term by building on notions of unequal power relationships in queer theory and Mikhail Bakhtin's carnivalesque. Drawing on the term

heteronormativity, and from "Lat. *aeto*-; pertaining to age", she defines *aetonormativity* as the "adult normativity that governs the way children's literature has been patterned from its emergence until the present day" (2010, p. 8). This age-based power relationship, she argues, differs from gender-based power relationships, for example, because its power positions change constantly: "yesterday's children grow up and become oppressors themselves" (pp. 8-9). Arguing that aetonormativity extends beyond children's literature to everyday life, Nikolajeva claims that adults have "unlimited power", whereas children lack financial, political, and social power (p. 9). Nikolajeva's concept recognises constructions of adults as the norm and, therefore, powerful, and of children as powerless; in other words, it expresses the idea that children and adults are different and that children are 'less than' even as their power relationship is circular, for the oppressed (children) will eventually become oppressors (adults). This power relationship also informs a common understanding of children as incomplete, unstable, dependent "becomings" and adults as complete, stable, and independent "beings" (Lee, 2001, p. 5). Conceptualising childhood and adulthood as distinct states bookending growth, the grand narrative of growth privileges adulthood: childhood is a state that can (and must) be discarded in order to attain the state of adulthood. Privileging adulthood supports, and justifies, aetonormative power structures that conceive of children as 'less than' adults and adults as more powerful than children, rendering adulthood a necessary and desirable goal. Even where childhood and children are valued, encouraged, and protected, the grand narrative of growth's positioning of childhood as a temporary state at the bottom of a hierarchy renders it "an easy target for dismissal" (Trites, 2014, p. 134). Only by achieving adulthood, the grand narrative of growth suggests, can individuals transcend their non-(adult-)being, for example in terms of voting rights, and ascend in existing power structures.

In fact, this child-adult binary, with its associated power imbalance, has such strong cultural currency that it also operates in other power dynamics. As the introduction to a

2016 anthology of the zine *No! Against Adult Supremacy* notes: "Every hierarchy, every abuse, every act of domination that seeks to justify or excuse itself appeals through analogy to the rule of adults over children. We are all indoctrinated from birth in ways of 'because I said so'" (2016/2017, p. 15). This analogy has been recognised in discourses of gender, race, and disability, for example. Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman; with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects* (1792) argues that men "try to secure the good conduct of women by attempting to keep them always in a state of childhood" (1792/2009, ch. 2, p. 88), and Field, in her study *The Struggle for Equal Adulthood: Gender, Race, and the Fight for Citizenship in Antebellum America* (2014), observes that women and black men focused on the childhood-adulthood binary in their political activism by campaigning for "equal adulthood – that is, the idea that all human beings, regardless of race or sex, should be able to claim the same rights, opportunities, and respect as they age" (p. 1). Furthermore, it has frequently been noted that "people with disabilities, regardless of age, are treated as if they were forever children" (O'Neal, 2016/2017a, p. 155). These unequal power structures in terms of gender, race, and ability also, in turn, shape possibilities and opportunities available to individuals in the grand narrative of upwards growth. As explained in the Introduction, my thesis focuses on age-related power dynamics particularly in terms of gender.

Perpetuating an unequal child(hood)-adult(hood) binary, the grand narrative of upwards growth not only requires commitment to adulthood as the only acceptable destination of growth but comes with particular expectations about childhood and adulthood, and about how transitions between them are achieved. In the process, the grand narrative of growth coercively prescribes milestones and practices, and hails individuals according to these at the expense of other options. Upwards growth operates on a concept of time as linear, insisting that there are 'right' ways of spending it to achieve adulthood; hence, the grand narrative of growth perpetuates chrononormativity, and vice versa.

Freeman coins *chrononormativity* (*chronos*- 'time', from Greek *khronos*) in *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (2010) to describe "interlocking temporal schemes necessary for genealogies of descent and for the mundane workings of everyday life" (2010, p. xxiii) and "the use of time to organize individual human bodies toward maximum productivity" (p. 3). Elaborating on Dana Luciano's concept of *chronobiopolitics*, Freeman mentions concrete examples of such temporal schemes: "chronobiological societ[ies]", through the state, other institutions, and representations, "link properly temporalized bodies to narratives of movement and change" that are "teleological schemes of events or strategies for living such as marriage, accumulation of health and wealth for the future, reproduction, childrearing, and death and its attendant rituals" (p. 4). Consequently, chrononormativity refers to ways in which time is ideologically structured into specific normative trajectories. Freeman notes that, through submitting to these "particular orchestrations of time", bodies become legible as "naked flesh is bound into socially meaningful embodiment through temporal regulation" (p. 3). While Freeman uses chrononormativity to challenge heteronormativity in her monograph, I employ chrononormativity to examine a pervasive idea that time is progressing inevitably and chronologically, and that there are ideologically preferred ways of how to spend this linear time to achieve upwards growth into adulthood. For this understanding, I build on a previous application of Freeman's concept and a related observation by Ellen Langer. In a qualitative study of heteronormativity, Kathleen Riach, Nicholas Rumens, and Melissa Tyler use chrononormativity to explore "ideas about the 'right' time for particular life stages surrounding partnering, parenting and caring vis-a-vis career progression, promotions and flexible working" (2014, p. 1678). Their interpretation of chrononormativity aligns with Langer's interpretation of psychologist Bernice Neugarten's concept *social clocks*: "we gauge our lives by the implicit belief that there is a 'right age' for certain behaviors or attitudes" (2009, p. 22). Thus, I employ chrononormativity to

describe normative ideas that insist on a 'right' time for life stages; a 'right' chronological age for certain physical, emotional, and intellectual developments, and for certain behaviours, attitudes, and cultural practices; and a 'right' time for rites of passage from childhood into adulthood.

In line with Louis Althusser's notion that "there is no practice except by and in ideology" (1971/2008, p. 44), I propose that conventional rites of passage serve a wider ideological impetus to propel human beings along chrononormative trajectories of upwards growth, and to measure their progress. The concept of rites of passage was developed by anthropologist Arnold van Gennep to examine transitions of individuals from one social status to another. Van Gennep defines rites of passage as "special acts" or ceremonies that accompany transitions "from group to group and from one social situation to the next" (1960/2004, p. 3). According to van Gennep, rites of passage can be subdivided into preliminal rites of separation (detachment from former status), liminal rites of transition (being in between statuses, usual rules are suspended) and postliminal rites of incorporation (attaining the new status) (p. 11), and include birth, childhood, "social puberty", marriage, parenthood, occupational specialisation, and death (p. 3). Upwards growth depends on rites of passage, for, as Jenks observes in his sociological study of childhood, "[a]ny transposition from one status location to another is never simply a matter of physical growth or indeed physical change" – it "require[s] a transformatory process such as valediction, rites of passage and initiation ceremonies" (1996/2005, p. 7). In twenty-first century Western cultures, conventionally expected rites of passage from childhood into adulthood include long-standing ideas such as the first sexual activity, beginning and finishing various levels of education, the first vote, gaining employment, establishing a stable romantic relationship, getting married, procreating, raising children, ushering them through their rites of passage, retiring, and dying, and more recent ideas such as acquiring one's first mobile phone. Such rites of passage raise questions about the

boundary between childhood and adulthood. For example, it is unclear whether individuals cross it when they finish school, start working, marry, or only once they themselves have children: adulthood may hinge on levels of education, financial independence, the ability to commit to another human being, or on accepting the responsibility of creating and raising offspring. Upwards growth could be considered to stop as soon as adulthood is reached, or else each further rite of passage could be seen to deliver adult beings into higher levels of adulthood. As I will show when drawing on ideas of alternative growth by thinkers from different disciplines, reaching adulthood, assuming that reaching it is indeed possible and desirable, is less straightforward than the grand narrative of growth allows.

The pressure to grow up, to conform to chrononormative expectations, is so pervasive and pressing that it is explicitly addressed in cultural representations. Rose recognises that pressure as "a crescendo of insistence and anxiety: 'grow up', 'will grow up, 'must grow up'" (1984/1992, p. 68) in her reading of the beginning of Barrie's *Peter and Wendy* (1911), and terms it "the *trauma* of growth" (p. 68, emphasis in original). In McCaughrean's twenty-first century sequel to Barrie's *Peter Pan* oeuvre, *Peter Pan in Scarlet* (2006), this potentially traumatising pressure is more explicit, perhaps because the idea of growing up has become increasingly uncertain and is thought to need reinforcing: child characters are literally hailed into upwards growth. Peter's arch enemy, adult pirate Hook tricks children into growing physically, mentally, and emotionally by asking them about their future plans: "The moment a child answers the question, '*What do you want to be when you grow up?*' he is halfway to being an adult. He has betrayed childhood and Looked Ahead." (2006, p. 193, emphasis in original). For example, Slightly, tricked by Hook into thinking about wanting to be a musician when he grows up (pp. 114-115), grows taller – "his evening shirt now barely reached to his knees" (p. 128) – and becomes an "adult" who feels responsible for others and "cannot help caring" (p. 194). Hook's question can be read as an instance of hailing, a concept by Althusser that describes the

process of how ideology recruits individuals as its subjects (1971/2008, p. 47). Althusser argues that ideology addresses, or hails, individuals much like an everyday "'Hey, you there!'" and that, by recognising themselves within this address, by turning around, individuals become subjects, letting themselves be defined by that ideology (p. 48). For Althusser, hailing is a process that constantly happens without a clear temporal sequence: "*individuals are always-already subjects*" because ideology, to be able to present its constructions as natural or true, needs to negate its own existence (pp. 49-50, emphasis in original). Therefore, hailing itself tends to be invisible, rather than an actual verbal shout and an actual physical turning around. In McCaughrean's novel, such hailing is literalised: the grand narrative of growth, through an adult character, hooks, as it were, child characters by asking them a question and, when these child characters engage by imagining an answer, they physically, emotionally, and mentally grow up into adults. This hailing/hooking is particularly interesting because it is set in Neverland, a space conceived by Barrie as a safe haven for escaping normative growth. Dismantling this safe space, McCaughrean's novel suggests that hailing is inescapable. To extrapolate, alternative ideas of growth need to engage with, rather than attempt to completely avoid or negate, upwards growth; sideways growth, as I will demonstrate, allows for such engagement.

The pressure to grow up is so extensive that it also affects adults. Phoebe Waller-Bridge's television series *Fleabag* (2016–present), targeting an adult audience, addresses this pressure through its adult protagonist. A woman who has complicated family relationships, is sexually promiscuous instead of committing to a stable relationship, runs an unsuccessful guinea pig-themed café, and is haunted by memories of her dead best friend, the protagonist does not conform to conventional expectations of adulthood. Implying that this failure to conform renders her not only non-adult but non-being, the series's title describes the protagonist as a contaminated object rather than a human being. Although by no means perfect nor perfectly happy, other adult characters are more

successful at achieving landmarks of upwards growth; for example, her father has overcome his wife's death and is in a stable romantic relationship, and her sister has a husband and a stepson, and is offered a promotion. Fleabag tells herself to change:

> You don't take yourself seriously. [. . .] You need to reach out to your family. You need to stop provoking your sister – just grow up. You do not take yourself seriously as a businesswoman, you need to pay your fucking bills, you need to be nicer to Hilary [her guinea pig], you need to get a new hat! (S1E5, 16:39)

Here, growing up means taking responsibility for one's relationships, finances, and pets, and a change of demeanour as well as clothes. Fleabag recognises the pressure to grow up 'properly' and, deciding to change, she, at least momentarily, turns around to the constant, invisible hailing of the grand narrative of growth. Representing such hailing in relation to an adult character and for an adult audience, *Fleabag* implies that the grand narrative of growth affects adults as much as children. Moreover, this scene reflects a wider socio-cultural discourse of concern in twenty-first century Britain, discussed in the Introduction, that adults are not growing up as expected and that they need to be adjusted (or hailed).

While directing it at oneself, as Fleabag does, is unusual, the imperative demand to 'grow up' is frequently used to admonish those whose appearance, behaviour, attitudes, desires, movements, or decisions are deemed inappropriate for (because conventionally associated with people younger than) their chronological age. The imperative "Grow up!" is an example of how, even in everyday conversations, people emphatically and routinely impose and enforce boundaries between childhood and adulthood with a bias for adulthood. "Grow up!" is akin to the adjective *childish*, which criticises individuals for being "selfish, petulant, frivolous, irrational and emotionally immature" (Hollindale, 1997/2001, p. 51). Notably, while words such as *childish*, *infantile*, and *immature* consider traits associated with children to be negative, no similarly pejorative adjectives exist for traits of adults as an entire category (although more specific subcategories of adults, such

as middle-aged and elderly people, are used in similar ways).[7] However, where *childish* mainly criticises, *Grow up!* actively and explicitly demands a change. In light of numerous occasions on which myself and others have been told to 'grow up' when planning adventures, being silly, or daydreaming instead of pursuing rites of passage or embracing conventional adulthood, I propose that ordering individuals to 'grow up' can be an act of policing and silencing. Telling someone to grow up invalidates their current self as 'not good enough.' More generally, the demand to 'grow up' discourages choices, behaviours, interests, movements, and attitudes that illegible within the grand narrative of growth, and that, while not conventionally (re)productive, nevertheless can be valuable in themselves or offer insights and possibilities beyond (or beside) hegemonic ideas. Furthermore, if, as Halberstam argues, capitalist societies "contain rebellion by casting it as childish" (5 Sept. 2014, 07:06), then telling people to 'grow up' can be used to prevent, obstruct, and prohibit acts of rebellion – for example, subversive acts of growing sideways – by ordering deviants to conform. Thus, the grand narrative of upwards growth not only misses, but also *dis*misses other ways of being and growing.

Alternative Concepts of Growth

Ideas of growth that are not comfortably subsumed by the grand narrative of upwards growth have emerged across disciplines, and geographical and temporal contexts, sometimes as fleetingly mentioned notions, and sometimes as elaborate concepts. Pinpointing moments at which thinking around growth has changed and ordering them thematically, I draw on relevant examples of such ideas as a discourse of alternative

[7] The twenty-first century coinage *adulting*, which I examine in Chapter Three, unsettles this dynamic because it is used both as a celebration of conforming and of being unable or unwilling to conform to conventions of adulthood.

growth to situate and develop my concept of growing sideways. I focus on ideas that challenge the grand narrative of growth by refusing or complicating its upwards trajectory; its inevitable, unidirectional linearity; its unequal separation of child(hood) and adult(hood); and its definition of growth as progress. I particularly build on alternative ideas of growth in queer theory.

Not Upwards, Full Stop.

Presenting growth as upwards and leading towards adulthood, the grand narrative of growth implies that growth is goal-oriented and finite. Alternative ideas question the direction and the finitude of that growth. As discussed in the Introduction, cultural responses to fin de siècle Britain such as Wilde's *The Picure of Dorian Gray* (1891) and Barrie's *Peter Pan* (1902–1911) propose stasis, *not* growing physically, intellectually, and perhaps even emotionally. This alternative to growing up is a fantasy, not an option readily available in everyday life, and is often, even by in-text statements such as "no life is spoiled but one whose growth is arrested" (Wilde, 1891/1994, p. 88), criticised as a negative fantasy. Likewise, Waller observes that deviations from conventional, dominant developmental frameworks of progression upwards are accompanied by "an acute anxiety", for example through "negative images of [. . .] stagnation" (2008/2009, p. 54, cf. p. 29), in the fantastic realist novels for adolescents she analyses. Nonetheless, texts such as Barrie's and Wilde's do signal a resistance to the grand narrative of upwards growth that can encourage people to search for other alternatives. In contrast to fantasies of stasis, growing sideways embraces physical, emotional, and intellectual growth, without, however, framing them as directed upwards towards adulthood, as in the grand narrative.

The concept of growing up has also been complicated in literary criticism, through the 1980s term *growing down* for oppressive ideas of female growth. Reading American literary representations of growing up through the prism of gender, Barbara White and

Annis Pratt observe that representations of "growing up female" (White, 1985, p. 137) provide "models for 'growing down' rather than for 'growing up'" (Pratt, with White, 1981, p. 14). Analysing archetypal trajectories in "women's novels", Pratt notes that "the orderly pattern of development is disrupted by social norms dictating powerlessness for women", so that "young girls grow down rather than up", courtship and marriage "are often subverted by madness and death", sexual activity and abstinence "alike are punished with tragic denouements", and "personal power makes the conquering hero [in rebirthing journeys] a cultural deviant" (Pratt, 1981, p. 168). For example, in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1869), Jo's "disappointment in not being a boy", as a result of which she has to "stay at home and knit, like a poky old woman" and, eventually, "grow up, and be Miss March, and wear long gowns, and look as prim as a China aster", is read by Pratt and White as a recognition of "the irony that growing up, according to contemporary gender norms, means growing down – an atrophy of the personality, a premature senility" (Pratt, with White, 1981, p. 30). Corresponding with my conceptual areas, conventional gender roles restrict Jo to a particular appearance (long gowns, prim), activity (knitting), and space (home). Similarly, Nikolajeva notes that, while male initiation rites are depicted as linear and goal-oriented in myths, female initiation rites are portrayed as circular and aimed at "repetition, rebirth, the eternal life cycle" due to the idea that "[t]he cardinal function of the female body is reproduction" (2000, p. 147). In Western cultures, Nikolajeva states, "female myths [. .] have been suppressed and muted by the dominant male culture" (p. 148). Drawing on Julia Kristeva's notion of *women's time*, Waller argues that developmental frameworks prefer "a masculine version of time" concerned with "linear progression", whereas "*female* development is situated as [. . .] an other", for "girls, it is suggested, can only go so far on this progressive route before they slip back into matrilineal patterns of 'women's time'" (2008/2009, p. 35), such as motherhood. Jay Griffiths explores this juxtaposition of masculine and feminine time as a wider political

structure that leads to "mocking, hating or ignoring" menstruation, and to valuing traditional men's work over traditional women's work (1999/2002, pp. 144-146, 151-152). These observations demonstrate that the grand narrative of growth is gendered for children and adults. Because the grand narrative of growth in patriarchal societies fails to secure the same rights, privileges, or opportunities irrespective of gender, growing down is an involuntary part of normative (upwards) growth for some. Growing up, for females (and other gender identities than male), may differ noticeably from male upwards growth.

Even Barrie's fin de siécle fantasy of stasis as an alternative to upwards growth is gendered. Wendy, the only female child character in Peter's posse, already assumes a maternal role in Neverland, essentially performing upwards growth while in a space of stasis, and not only grows up but grows up "quicker" (1911/2008, p. 220). The concept of *puer aeternus* 'eternal boy', which Peter embodies, supports the impression that stasis, like upwards growth, privileges males, for, while some critics paraphrase *puer aeternus* as 'eternal *child*',[8] no equivalent term exists that specifies or includes other genders. Similar dynamics shape Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and its sequel *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* (1871). Both texts question norms established in Alice's 'real' environments through her adventures in 'other' places. However, as these adventures (and places) are contained within "a curious dream" (1865/1998, p. 109) and, if with some confusion over who dreamed it, "such a nice dream" (1871/1998, p. 238), they fail to provide sustainable alternatives to upwards growth. Unlike Peter, and like Wendy, Alice leaves. In turn, the adult protagonist of P. L. Travers's *Mary Poppins* books (1934–1988) has continued access to topsy-turvy adventures but

[8] Please see Beauvais's analysis of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince* (1943) in her monograph *The Mighty Child* (2015) for a detailed discussion of the implications of the concept of *puer aeternus*, and its possible transformation from "the eternal child of Victorian and Edwardian children's literature" into *puer existens*, "a child who cannot remain eternal [. . .]; a child whom the adult desperately desires to see *existing*, [. . .] standing outside of itself" (p. 22, emphasis in original). While Beauvais expands *puer aeternus* to potentially incluce females by referring to *children* rather than *boys*, the example of Saint-Exupéry's protagonist, like Peter Pan, is still male.

compartmentalises them. The first novel, *Mary Poppins* (1934), sets the scene. Mary is presented as the only human being, "the Great Exception" who maintains the extended skills and knowledge of under-one-year-olds, including the ability to communicate with nature (1934/1998, p. 118). However, she denies each of her magical adventures as soon as it concludes by reasserting established structures and, for example, is offended when asked about her birthday celebration with animals at a zoo: "At the Zoo? In the middle of the night? Me? A quiet orderly person [. . .]?" (p. 146). Furthermore, she pursues employment instead of incessantly adventuring, and employment that, however much on her terms, requires her to perform the traditional female role of child care, raising the question whether Mary works as a nanny because she enjoys this line of work or because a chronologically adult female character may not engage in activities associated with childhood without the alibi of teaching children lessons in upwards growth through magical adventures. Like Peter, Alice and Mary are iconic literary protagonists from 'Golden Age' children's literature that unsettle the grand narrative of upwards growth. However, Alice is less in charge of Wonderland than Peter is of Neverland, for dreams are difficult to control and tend to end with waking up. Although Mary avoids some aspects of upwards growth, she, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, firmly keeps one foot in the 'real' world of adult commitments and denies her adventures instead of fully embracing them. These female protagonists' alternatives to upwards growth are limited in ways that Peter's is not. Peter, in turn, by choosing to remain in Neverland, is excluded from the 'real' world and the experiences available there.

Growing down remains a relevant metaphor, alongside ideas of "equal adulthood" (Field, 2014), because gender inequalities continue to exist. Twenty-first century discourses such as the #metoo movement and legally enforced research into British gender pay gaps (see Topping, & Sweney, 5 Apr. 2018, n.pag.) demonstrate that gender inequalities are being investigated on a larger scale than previously. The metaphor of

growing down illuminates such inequalities as White and Pratt's perspective from literary criticism fruitfully links to lived experiences of females, and those of people of other oppressed identities, who are prevented from achieving "equal adulthood", for example by being denied physical, emotional, and intellectual integrity, respect, acknowledgement of their labour, or financial resources. Downwards growth, then, provides a metaphor for systemic inequalities that restrict some people's access to upwards growth through various glass ceilings. As upwards growth is frequently linked to systemic inequalities, particularly in terms of gender, worthwhile alternatives to normative ideas of growth also need to address other patterns of oppression than aetonormativity, such as sexism, that shape normative ideas. However, because downwards growth denotes a negative, and involuntary, version of growing up, this metaphor is more useful for recognising, rather than challenging, oppressive patterns of upwards growth. Growing sideways, I will demonstrate, challenges patterns, highlights inequalities, *and* offers alternatives that are less prescriptive than growing up and less negative than stasis or growing down.

In line with lifespan psychology, which studies human development as ongoing over the life course, growing sideways also understands physical, emotional, and intellectual growth as continuing, instead of as finite. Lifespan psychology became a significant approach around the time of White and Pratt's work on growing down, in the 1980s. In "Theoretical Propositions of Life-Span Developmental Psychology: On the Dynamics Between Growth and Decline" (1987), Paul B. Baltes defines life-span developmental psychology as a multidisciplinary "study of constancy and change in behaviour throughout the life course (ontogenesis), from conception to death" (1987, p. 611, 613). Amongst its theoretical propositions, Baltes mentions the "[m]ultidirectionality" of ontogenetic changes, understanding development as "the joint occurrence of gain (growth) and loss (decline)", and "intraindividual plasticity" in development (p. 613). For example, lifespan psychology studies the idea that "*any* process of development entails an

inherent dynamic between gains and losses", and that, therefore, "no process of development consists only of growth or progression" (Baltes, 1987, p. 611, emphasis in original). Thus, lifespan psychology defines development as ongoing, multidirectional, and idiosyncratic. Reflecting the increasing acceptance of these ideas, Tania Zittoun et al.'s study *Human Development in the Life Course: Melodies of Living* notes that "[m]any scientists and practitioners admit today that adults in the mid-years or older need to learn continuously" (2013, p. 203) and that each individual's life course is "a unique trajectory that requires to be understood on its own premises" (p. 4). However, they, like the grand narrative of growth, insist that "[d]evelopment is *irreversible*" (p. 35, emphasis in original). My concept of growing sideways draws on these alternative ideas from psychology by understanding growth as continuous rather than finite, multidirectional, and idiosyncratic, and takes them further by questioning the irreversibility of upwards growth.

Irregularity

Whereas the grand narrative prescribes rites of passage and cultural practices as part of an inevitable and unidirectional normative trajectory, some alternative ideas conceptualise growth as irregular. Psychologist Langer's research indicates that physical and mental growth are reversible. Her 1970s experiment demonstrated that re-creating a year from their twenties (here 1959) for nursing home residents can improve their physical and mental abilities, even lead to "look[ing] noticably younger" (2009, p. 10). Based on this experiment, Langer's *Counterclockwise: Mindful Health and the Power of Possibility* (2009) argues for mind over matter: "It is not primarily our physical selves that limit us but rather our mindset about our physical limits" (2009, p. 11). While she primarily focuses on health in this study, Langer includes a chapter on possibilities of affecting aging processes through mindfulness (ch. 9). Her research implies that conventions established in the grand narrative, by influencing personal mindsets, can have concrete effects even on physical

growth. Instead of understanding growth as an inevitable trajectory, she argues that growth can be affected by mindsets. My concept of sideways growth shares her interest in reversibility, plasticity, flexibility, and the effects of attitudes on growth.

Psychologist Jeffrey Jensen Arnett's concept of *emerging adulthood* allows for another kind of flexibility. In "Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development from the Late Teens through the Twenties" (2000), Arnett suggests that *emerging adulthood* is a developmental phase between, and distinct from, adolescence and adulthood in industrialised countries. Emerging adults are becoming independent without entering responsibilities and, instead, are "exploring a variety of possible life decisions in love, work, and worldviews" (2000, p. 469); they are in higher education for longer, postpone marriage and childbirth, and understand themselves as being in between adolescence and adulthood (p. 472). Arnett relates his concept to previous theories such as Erik H. Erikson's notion of *moratorium*, a period of "free role experimentation" (qtd. in Arnett, 2000, p. 470). In "Reflections on the Dissent of Contemporary Youth" (1970), Erikson defines moratorium as a finite period within the stage of youth in which people can "experiment with patterns of behaviour which are both – or neither quite – infantile and adult" (1970, p. 157). As Arnett also understands emerging adulthood to be finite, his concept, instead of offering a theorisation of alternative growth, adds "a period" of "delayed" adult commitments (2000, p. 470). Nevertheless, his concept shakes conventional ideas of upwards growth by validating a postponement of adulthood and rites of passage as a collective period in its own right rather than reading such postponement as individual failure. However, Arnett has been criticised for overlooking that some upper class youths in previous centuries also fit the criteria of emerging adults and that emerging adulthood, even in industrialised countries, is the privilege of affluent classes (cf. Hendry and Kloep, 2010). Emerging adulthood is less specifically a turn-of-the-twenty-first-century phenomenon and less universally available than Arnett suggests. While equally

moving beyond conventional ideas of failure, my concept recognises that, although growing sideways takes specific forms in specific contexts, it is not exclusive to one particular socio-cultural context. Avoiding a claim to universality, growing sideways allows for examining factors that determine its availability, shapes, and limitations by considering power structures.

In *Out of Time: The Pleasures & Perils of Ageing* (2013), Lynne Segal similarly questions rigid age identities. Segal develops D. W. Winnicott's idea that human beings are "all ages and no age" to coin *temporal vertigo*:

> As we age, changing year on year, we also retain, in one manifestation or another, traces of all the selves we have been, creating a type of temporal vertigo and rendering us psychically, in one sense, all ages and no age. (2013/2014, p. 4)

Access to previous, younger selves is not irrevocably lost through change, or growth. Furthermore, Segal proposes that human beings actively access these selves by engaging in "every-day time travelling" (p. 4), for "[a]geing is neither simply linear, nor is it any single discrete process" because, mentally, "we race around, moving seamlessly between childhood, old age and back again" – "we can, and we do, bridge different ages, psychically, all the time" (p. 19). Segal's understanding of identity as time-travelling between previously experienced chronological ages allows for fluidity and agency. Growing sideways builds on this concept by exploring uncertain movements that are more fluid than a simple back-and-forth between age categories, and pinpointing an element of choice.

Allowing for some (temporal) reversibility, children's literature critic Hollindale re-imagines the frequently used metaphor of growth as a journey, of "childhood as a gradual, steady climb towards a plateau of achieved maturity" (1997/2001, p. 37), in less straightforward terms. He describes growing up as "irregular journeying":

> To understand the child's climb we must take account of all the pause for breath, the sliding back down bits of scree, the numerous picnic places and bivouacs from which the child too examines the landscape, finding it sometimes marvellous and sometimes horrible. To understand the adult's plateau we must see that it undulates, has knolls and clips and sometimes chasms, that you must fight against a gale to keep your footing. (Some people find a hollow and just sit there.) Occasionally you climb back the way you came, either to shelter from the wind or to see the lower slopes again more closely, although they will not look the same as they did the first time, for you bring with you your knowledge of invisible horizons. And often, very often, you climb down to give children a hand on the rough bits. (p. 38)

Hollindale's metaphor concedes that childhood and adulthood have similarities: children "examine", which implies that they can think critically and have agency, and adults, due to "gale[s]" and uneven terrain, may not be secure or omniscient in their adulthood. More importantly, his metaphor allows for children and adults to stray from prescribed paths of growth: children may pause rather than hurry towards adulthood, and adults can approach childhood. However, children must eventually reach permanent adulthood or "irreversible adulthood" (Hollindale, 1997/2001, p. 32). Adults can find comfort in but cannot fully inhabit childhood, as their view of it is shaped by adulthood and their climb "back" temporary, and often intended to help children grow upwards. Although Hollindale's metaphor still presents growth from childhood into adulthood as an inevitable process of climbing upwards and reaching a plateau of maturity, his model loosens some of the rigidity of upwards growth.

My concept of growing sideways celebrates irregularity. Becoming an adult, legally at least, and in affluent countries, is not like climbing a hill or mountain, because it requires no special effort (nor special skills or gear) other than staying alive long enough.

The metaphorical landscape of growing sideways is a sea.[9] The sea allows for a variety of fluid movements and directions: you can move forwards, backwards, in circles, up, and down. Instead of the more certain climbing up-plateau binary, it is unclear where childhood and adulthood are located in the sea (buoyants can mark areas but are obviously arbitrary), and, at any chronological age, people can glimpse things below that they may not understand. Humans are born with acquatic instincts, and can learn more elaborate movements as they grow, for example, paddling, swimming in different styles and at different speeds, snorkling, and diving. Yet, learning more elaborate movements does not prevent them from floating or splashing about. The sea may change in roughness, colour, and wave shape according to tidal zones and weather, which stand in for developments and pressures in the individual's environment, society, and culture. Growing sideways, then, is not the absence of structures and pressures, but allows for fluidity, uncertainty, and irregularity in navigating (around) these. Challenging an inevitable trajectory of leaving childhood for adulthood also allows for challenging the grand narrative's child-adult binary.

Re-evaluating Categories

The grand narrative's child(hood)-adult(hood) binary, which privileges adult(hood), can be questioned through notions that advocate overlaps of age categories as preferable, change its unequal balance in the favour of childhood, highlight the costs of this binary for adulthood, and understand childhood and adulthood as vague concepts.

Children's literature critic Gubar's *kinship model* positions childhood and adulthood as similar. She offers it as an alternative to the *deficit model* of childhood, which conceives of children as "unable to grasp certain concepts or skills" and the *difference model* of childhood, which "stress[es] the radical alterity or otherness of children",

[9] I extend my thanks to Jane Suzanne Carroll for suggesting the sea as a metaphor.

constructing them "as a separate species, categorically different from adults" (2013, p. 451). Segregating childhood and adulthood, these two models support the grand narrative of upwards growth. In contrast, Gubar's *kinship model* posits that children and adults are akin – "neither exactly the same nor radically dissimilar", and that, because growth is "erratic", "messy" and not always linear, their abilities and powers are not neatly distributed according to age categories (pp. 453-454). Her model allows children more agency: "we should not regard even the tiniest infant as entirely voiceless or non-agential" (p. 453). As "[t]here is no one moment when we suddenly flip over from being a child to being an adult", every human being's "younger and older selves are multiple and interlinked" (p. 454). Gubar's model has also been linked to lifespan theory (Waller, 2017, p. 138). Growing sideways expands Gubar's idea of kinship to include the possibility of children and adults together forming communities on equal footing, and reflects her messy and erratic sense of growth through recognising a myriad of possible movements and ways of growing that combine aspects of both childhood and adulthood.

Gubar's model is especially promising in combination with Beauvais's interpretation of aetonormativity. Developing Nikolajeva's concept, Beauvais proposes that both children and adults have power, if in different forms. Referring to Reynolds's notion of children being powerful because of their "potential" (qtd. in Beauvais 2012/2013, p. 81), Beauvais states that children have *might* because there is "a future for them in which to act" (p. 82). Adults, in turn have *authority*, the ability "to counsel, influence, or order, from a position which all parties accept as being in some way legitimate" (p. 79); because it depends on experience and expertise, this type of power is "traditionally augmented as time passes" (pp. 81-82). Complicating the child-adult power relationship complicates the circularity of changing power positions, for "[w]hat one loses in might, one gains in authority" (p. 82). Beauvais's interpretation of aetonormativity is based on her conceptualisation of the difference between children and adults as "temporal otherness":

children and adults "have overlapping but distinct temporalities" and their difference is an "imagined otherness", "not in nature or status but contingent on the passing of time, leading to the universally shared certainty of being one and then (hopefully) the other" (2015, p. 18). If the difference between childhood and adulthood is temporal and not complete (overlapping), then their power positions are ambiguous and changable. However, Beauvais's concept of might implies that children's power relies on their possibile future actions rather than locating part of their power in their present. Beauvais suggests that more types of power remain to be identified in child-adult relationships, for "there could [. . .] be many other meanings of the word 'power' which find themselves reflected in the discourse of children's literature" (2012/2013, p. 82). Considering that babies may dictate adult timetables through communicating their needs, that children can demand adult attention (Jenks, 1996/2005, p. 124), that child consumers are said to have "pester power" over their parents (Lee, 2001, p. 77) and that, through irreverently curious "why" questions, children may challenge adult norms, I propose that children also have types of power in the present. Moreover, if power dynamics are conceptualised in terms of intersectionality – considering factors such as class, gender, and race alongside age – some children and adults may be more powerful than their peers and some children may be more powerful than some adults.[10] In this thesis, I seek to use growing sideways to pluralise views of adult-child power relationships.

In *Growing Young* (1981), anthropologist Ashley Montagu challenges the conventional child-adult binary by coining a concept of alternative growth that privileges childhood. Montagu argues that neoteny, which he defines as the "slowing down of the rate of the development" and "the extension of the phases of development from birth to old age" (1981/1989, p. 1), affects the evolution of humans' physical traits and behavioural

[10] I am grateful to Sinéad Moriarty for lively discussions on this topic.

patterns (p. 2) in a "process of growing young" (p. 1).[11] Montague notes a Western convention "arbitrarily to set limits to the phases of development" and conceptualise them as "stages", whereas, he argues, "[d]evelopment is a continuous process, not a series of periods separated one from the other, each requiring different kinds of conformities, obligations, statuses, and roles" (pp. 100-101); although "[s]uch social arrangements are, of course, necessary in every society", he objects to "the rigidity with which these are conceived and the boundaries within which they are enclosed" (p. 101). Considering it "an error of thinking" to assume that humans must "leave each stage behind" (p. 104), Montagu suggests that human beings, "in body, spirit, feeling, and conduct, [. . .] are designed to grow and develop in ways that emphasize rather than minimize childlike traits" and "were never intended to grow 'up' into the kind of adults most of us have become" (p. 2). Instead of "grow[ing] *out* of" childhood entirely, humans need to "continue to grow *in* and *with* most of the traits which characterise us as children" (p. 104, emphasis in original), such as curiosity, imaginativeness, playfulness, open-mindedness, experimental-mindedness, flexibility, humour, energy, honesty, eagerness to learn, the need to love, wonder, creativity, enthusiasm, joyfulness, optimism, trust, compassionate intelligence, song, and dance (pp. 2, 107). Rather than aiming for adults to revert to childhood or for children to remain children forever, Montagu's growing young advocates for developing, not merely retaining, traits that are present in children. His collection of traits intersects with Hollindale's definition of *childness* as "the quality of being a child – dynamic, imaginative, experimental, interactive and unstable" (1997/2001, p. 46), a quality which, he proposes, is an intersection at which adult and child can meet. Hollindale cites children's literature and play as examples of these meetings (pp. 47-49). However, Hollindale suspends child-adult divides only up to a point, claiming that childness is "differently experienced and understood" by child and adult: the adult can only ever be "a

[11] This evolutionary process is defined differently by different scholars, who also disagree on the extent of its significance in human evolution (see McNamara, 2002, pp. 103, 110-111).

participant-observer" (p. 47). Hollindale's idea chimes with sociologist Lee's "partial 'becoming-child'" (2001, p. 143), which "allows that adults may 'uncomplete' themselves" but only to a degree: "adults can never be children again" (p. 142-143). My concept builds on the overlaps between childhood and adulthood recognised by Hollindale and Lee, and, in line with Montagu, contends that these overlaps need not be partial or temporary, that they can, instead, be positively and fully inhabited. However, growing sideways seeks to neither prioritise childhood nor adulthood.

In "Progressive Utopia: Or, How to Grow Up without Growing Up" (1996), children's literature critic Perry Nodelman notes that the child-adult binary has particular implications also for adults. Describing this binary as a "divorce of childhood from maturity", he condemns it as "[o]ne of the ugly things the philosophy of the Romantic movement accomplished for us in its admiration of childlike qualities" (1996, p. 81). Blaming the work of Romantic poets such as William Blake and William Wordsworth especially, Nodelman states that their ideas persist, for "we still believe that children think differently, see differently, and feel differently from the way we do" (p. 81). Nodelman observes that separating childhood and adulthood "makes children into strangers in our midst" and creates, in adults, "a fruitless nostalgia" for childhood as "somehow better than, richer than, realer than the maturity we are stuck with" (1996, p. 81). Although Margaret Meek (Spencer) and Victor Watson assert that Romantic poets reflected, rather than caused, changing ideas of childhood, and that Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poetry was more influential than Blake's, they agree that "once it becomes accepted that children are *essentially and absolutely different* from adults, maturation becomes a more interesting process" that is accompanied by a sense of regret about losing childhood (2003, p. 8, emphasis in original). Whether described as regret or nostalgia, these observations imply that adulthood, while privileged in terms of power structures, is not entirely desirable.

The notion of vague concepts in analytic philosophy emphasises the separation of childhood and adulthood as arbitrary. Concepts are considered to be vague if they possess borderline cases that cannot be resolved, for which it is, thus, impossible to gauge what side of a conceptual boundary they belong (Sorensen, 2013, n.pag.). For example, analytical philosophers argue that there are borderline cases of which the predicate *child* is not clearly either true or untrue and which, thus, challenge the *law of the excluded middle*, for this classical principle of bivalence states that a predicate must be either true or not true of any one case (Keefe, & Smith, 1997, p. 2). Because of the existence of these borderline cases, the predicate *child* causes the so-called *sorites paradox*: starting from an example that this predicate is true of and moving away, one will eventually reach an example that it is not true of and yet it is difficult to ascertain exactly what amount of time passed makes the difference between a person being a child or an adult (Keefe, & Smith, 1997, p. 3). As childhood "fades gradually away, and does not come to a sudden end", there is no "last heartbeat of one's childhood" (R. M. Sainsbury, 1997, pp. 255-256). Considering *child* and *adult* as vague concepts destabilises the grand narrative of growth by pointing to the possibility of borderline cases (individuals that are neither child nor adult) and indicating the difficulty of knowing when exactly upwards growth is taking place or being completed, when adulthood is reached. Moreover, the categories *child* and *adult* may themselves never be completely true of any individual. Writing on metaphysics, H. G. Wells argues that it is pointless, even "stupi[d]", to try to locate a threshold at which a predicate no longer is true because "every term goes cloudy at its edges; [. . .] [e]very species waggles about in its definition, every tool is a little loose in its handle, every scale has its individual error" (1908, pp. 28-29). Similarly, children and adults alike may "waggle about" in their respective categories, leading to the existence of idioms such as *an old head on young shoulders* and *young at heart*. Indeed, *child* and *adult* might be more suitably understood as symbolic positions, as Judith Butler argues for gender categories. Based on Lacanian

discourse, Butler proposes that "becoming gendered involves impersonating an ideal that nobody actually inhabits", for "symbolic positions – 'man,' 'woman' – are never inhabited by anyone, and that's what defines them as symbolic: they're radically uninhabitable" (1992, p. 85). Applied to age, Butler's argument indicates that individuals can approximate but never fully inhabit the symbolic positions of *child* and *adult*. If childhood and adulthood are vague, arbitrary, and uninhabitable, re-imagining conventional ideas of them is a valid and valuable strategy of sideways growth.

Challenging the separation of child(hood) and adult(hood) into discrete and unequal states by allowing for connections and overlaps, growing sideways also seeks to challenge aetonormative power structures. Growing sideways includes a positive understanding of nostalgia, as facilitating sideways growth, as I will argue in Chapter Three. As upwards growth's child-adult binary can adversely affect both children and adults and, moreover, relies on vague concepts, growing sideways can be an alternative for both children and adults.

Enrichment

To counter the grand narrative of growth's idea of progressing upwards through particular rites of passage to an end-goal that is more desirable than other options, I look to ideas of enrichment that value varied experiences and interests over one-fits-all notions of progress. C. S. Lewis argues for enrichment by famously challenging a common understanding of a Bible quote in "On Three Ways of Writing for Children" (1966). The quote "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things" in I Corinthians of the Christian Bible's New Testament is often used to define growing up as abandoning certain attitudes and practices for others; Trites, for example, interprets "'childish things'" as "speaking, understanding, and thinking in less mature ways than adults do" and the quote's view on growing up as "overcoming

ignorance by learning" (2014, pp. 127-128). Lewis defines *childish things* differently: "When I became a man I put away childish things, including the fear of childishness and the desire to be very grown up" (1966/1994, p. 25). In opposition to "a false conception of growth", Lewis argues that "arrested development consists not in refusing to lose old things but in failing to add new things" and that losing a childhood taste before acquiring an adult taste is not "growth but simple change" (pp. 25-26). His understanding of growth defies a narrow definition of progress in favour of enrichment: as an adult, he likes hock, "which I am sure I should not have liked as a child" and "enjoy[s] Tolstoy and Jane Austen and Trollope" but also "still like[s] lemon-squash" and fairy tales – he "call[s] this growth or development because I have been enriched: where I formerly had only one pleasure, I now have two" (pp. 25-26). Growth as enrichment, then, is about continually exploring and adding to tastes, interests, and experiences, instead of, as required by the grand narrative of growth, replacing one set of activities with another or narrowing one's scope as an adult. Lewis admits that some experiences may be less suitable for or less interesting to children than adults but refrains from value judgements that privilege some experiences over others according to a child-adult binary.

Similar ideas are prevalent in twenty-first century contexts. A. O. Scott's article on the death of adulthood in American culture refers to the Bible quote's "childish" in a similar manner but conceives of Lewis's personal attitude as that of an entire group of people at a particular moment in time: "Grown people feel no compulsion to put away childish things: We can live with our parents, go to summer camp, play dodge ball, collect dolls and action figures and watch cartoons to our hearts' content." (14 Sept. 2014, n.pag.). American musician Gaelynn Lea's TEDx Talk "Why I Choose Enrichment over Progress" (2017) echoes Lewis's idea of growth as enrichment. Lea offers enrichment over "strictly progress" as a "life goal", arguing that the idea of progress, for example in self-help books, privileges people with particular types of agency over, for example, babies, dying people,

and people with severe disabilites, implying that "you are less valuable if you can't achieve goals" (01:15). Discarding "measurements, benchmarks, or forward momentum", enrichment "allows people to pursue desirable experiences just because they make living a richer experience and not because they lead to some desired outcome" (01:55). Shifting her focus to enrichment affected Lea's well-being: "I started to feel a lot lighter [. . .] more whole and free" (10:26). These examples demonstrate that, by countering or circumventing oppressive norms, alternatives to the grand narrative of growth can affect wider structures of feeling *and* personal wellbeing. Growing sideways allows for understanding growth both in terms of idiosyncratic values and interests and in terms of a collective attitude. Through challenging goal- or progress-oriented narratives, my concept seeks to expand rather than limit experiences and favours variety over restriction. I particularly explore enrichment in relation to play in Chapter Three.

Feeling Queer

As indicated in the Introduction, queer theory is acutely relevant to my research. Alongside being aetonormative and gendered, the grand narrative of growth is heteronormative. Queer experiences, such as refusing or being unable to pursue normative trajectories of, for example, parenthood render individuals illegible, less in tune with the grand narrative of growth, and more inclined to look for alternatives. Therefore, it is not surprising that queer theory has its own notion of growing sideways, coined by Stockton, which I discuss after explaining my approach to queer theory.

I use Sedgwick's definition of *queer*. According to Sedgwick, *queer* refers to "the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or *can't be* made) to signifiy monolithically" (p. 8, emphasis in original). Significantly for my thesis, she opens up the term beyond gender and sexuality by stating

that "a lot of the most exciting recent work around 'queer' spins the term outward" to discuss "the ways that race, ethnicity, postcolonial nationality criss-cross with [gender and sexuality] *and other* identity-constituting, identity-fracturing discourses" (pp. 8-9, emphasis in original). My research inhabits her placeholder "and other" by employing queer theory to examine age and growth. I draw on Sedgwick's application of *queer* "to those who live outside norms" and "people able to relish, learn from, or identify with such" (p. 8) to examine both those who actively create alternatives to upwards growth and those who relish in these creations without, perhaps, explicitly challenging upwards growth.

My application of ideas from queer theory to age and growth continues tendencies within queer theory that explore time and age in relation to growth in the context of sexual orientation. Halberstam's *In a Queer Time Time & Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (2005) observes that people can leave or be left behind by chrononormative trajectories and, instead, enter queer time. While Halberstam sees queer time "in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction" (2005, p. 1) and focuses on transgender people, queer time also, she suggests, encompasses homeless people, ravers, club kids, sex workers, and the unemployed (p. 10). In a roundtable discussion, Halberstam theorises *queer time* more explicitly as

> the perverse turn away from the narrative coherence of adolescence-early adulthood-marriage-reproduction-child rearing-retirement-death, the embrace of late childhood in place of early adulthood or immaturity in place of responsibility. It is a theory of queerness as a way of being in the world and a critique of the careful social scripts that usher even the most queer among us through major markers of individual development and into normativity. (Dinshaw et al, 2007, p. 182)

Although it predates Freeman's concept, Halberstam's *queer time* usefully relates to *chrononormativity*. In their qualitative study, Riach, Rumens and Tyler propose that

nonconforming individuals may not only be negated by chrononormativity but that they may also actively negate chrononormativity by "violating chrononormative life course expectations" (2014, pp. 1686-1687). Thus, temporal schemes can be resisted; however, resistance may come at a cost or place individuals out of legible time, making their bodies illegible. Halberstam's *queer time*, then, highlights possibilities of resisting chrononormativity and, by placing this resistance in a context of ideas of childhood, adulthood, and growth, accommodates "turn[ing] away from the narrative coherence" of upwards growth. Hence, non-normative growth can be explored through attention to non-normative time. Halberstam's *queer time* is connected to the term *queer aging*, for example in Mia Österlund and Sanna Lehtonen's research. They describe queer aging as "the awkward feeling of not being at ease with the age you biologically occupy" (Österlund, 2014, p. 35) and as "no longer ag[ing] and grow[ing] old according to natural patterns" due to a "depart[ure] from the normative assumptions concerning mainstream human lives" (Lehtonen, 2013, p. 164). Furthermore, Lehtonen employs *magic aging* as a subterm to *queer aging* to discuss literary characters who have "abnormal aging patterns, be it accelerated, arrested or reversed aging" (p. 164). Moreover, *queer aging* is used to describe experiences of (sexually) queer people in gerontological studies (cf. Ramirez-Valles, 2016; M. Hughes, 2006). *Queer time* and *queer aging* express some aspects of growing sideways such as a resistance to chrononormative patterns. Building on Halberstam's observation that the grand narrative can be resisted through "a way of being" and on Österlund's idea that you can feel queer (or "awkward") in relation to age categories, my concept of growing sideways expands these notions beyond sexual orientation to queer the grand narrative of growth. I consider feeling queer within one's age category particularly in my discussion of mismatches between chronological age and appearance in Chapter Two, and in terms of playful adults in Chapter Three.

Stockton's monograph *The Queer Child or Growing Sideways in the Twentieth Century* (2009) is particularly noteworthy because she employs the phrase *growing sideways*. Essentially describing but not specifically referring to the grand narrative of growth, Stockton observes that children are supposed to grow gradually, "as a vertical movement upward [. . .] toward full stature, marriage, work, reproduction, and the loss of childishness" and that this growth happens in delay, in Jacques Derrida's sense of meaning hanging in suspense until the destination is reached (2009, p. 4). She criticises "growing up" for being "a shortsighted, limited rendering of human growth, one that could oddly imply an end to growth when full stature (or reproduction) is achieved"; in contrast, "growing sideways" indicates "that the width of a person's experience or ideas, their motives or their motions, may pertain at any age, bringing 'adults' and 'children' into lateral contact" (p. 11). Her concept of growing sideways seems to describe an alternative to upwards growth that prioritises connecting child(hood) and adult(hood) over constructing them as a binary. However, Stockton also suggests that a child may "grow itself, in hiding, in delay" (p. 4) and that "[c]hildren *grow sideways as well as up* [. . .] in part because they cannot, according to our concepts, advance to adulthood until we say it's time" (p. 6, my emphasis). Thus, her notion of growing sideways denotes a pause or detour *until* upwards growth becomes fully possible and maintains adulthood as the ultimate goal. Attaching a helpful sense of celebration and fluctuation to sideways growth, she describes this pausing as "locat[ing] energy, pleasure, vitality, and (e)motion in the back-and-forth of connections and extensions that are not reproductive" (p. 13). While incorporating Stockton's complication of regular, linear trajectories through possibilities of pleasurable pauses and detours into my concept, I posit growing sideways as an alternative to upwards growth and challenge adulthood's privileged position. Pauses can be voluntary or involuntary and detours need not lead back to trajectories of upwards growth.

Moreover, Stockton is predominantly interested in gay children. She suggests that, "from the standpoint of 'normal' adults", every child is queer, either by being gay, which is not an acceptable or represented identity for children in twentieth-century culture, or by being "not-yet-heterosexual" (pp. 6-7). Analysing "a gay child", she notes, illuminates "the pain, closets, emotional labors, sexual motives, and sideways movements that attend all children" (p. 3). However, her observations of "[e]stranging, broadening, darkening forms of the child-as-idea" centre primarily on homosexual children, keeping "a keen eye on the ghostly gay child" (p. 3). Underlining this focus, Stockton is credited with being the first queer theorist "to explore the topic of childhood in order to illuminate questions about sexuality and culture" (Owen, 2010, p. 256). Based on Sedgwick's notion of the "protogay child", Stockton's sideways growth, thus, is not an universal option but the act of specific children and occurs due to unfavourable conditions: "The child who by reigning cultural definitions can't 'grow up' grows to the side of cultural ideals" (2009, p. 13).

The phrase *growing sideways* harbours much unused potential, for Stockton's notion, while facilitating interesting observations of alternative growth, neither provides nor aims to provide a critical concept to analyse growth in terms of age. Her research serves as an important springboard for my own concept. My concept of growing sideways takes Stockton's hint at the relevance of her research to a wider category of child(hood), and includes, without exclusively focusing on, children who are queer in terms of sexual orientation. Furthermore, I am equally interested in adults who feel queer in or engage in queering the grand narrative of growth, proposing that queering growth is relevant beyond sexuality and available to adults. I expand Stockton's definition of growing sideways as mainly a result of almost involuntary activities in the face of oppressive cultural ideals, by also understanding growing sideways as a choice.

The ideas of alternative growth that I have identified here suggest that thinking around growth changed impactfully in literary criticism (especially that concerned with gender and children), psychology, and queer studies, and that, while some ideas emerge earlier, the 1980s, 1990s, and, specifically, the 2000s are moments of increasing scholarly interest in alternative growth. Building on these ideas, growing sideways challenges the grand narrative of growth in the following ways. Instead of as a finite, upwards process, my concept understands growth as sideways: as continuing, non-prescriptive, multidirectional, and idiosyncratic. Growing sideways embraces irregularity, fluidity, possibilities, choices, and uncertainties over linear and inevitable growth. It can be the result of failing upwards growth and can itself be limited, for example through gender structures. Challenging the child-adult binary, growing sideways explores overlaps and continuities between childhood and adulthood that need not be only temporary or partially inhabited, does not privilege either category, and, consequently, seeks to question aetonormative power structures. Growing sideways prioritises enrichment, through individual and collective experiences, and pursuing idiosyncratic interests over progress trajectories. More specifically, growing sideways focuses on a variety of alternative growth choices, from life decisions around relationships and careers to choices around clothing and behaviour. Growing sideways facilitates sustainable long-term exploration of such choices and is inclusive because it can be expressed idiosyncratically. Growing sideways is a way of feeling queer in the grand narrative of growth and a way of queering it through structures of feeling.

Growing Sideways

Prior to providing a working definition of my concept of growing sideways and applying it to my key primary text, I consider eclectic connotations of the phrase *growing sideways*

and the word *sideways* beyond academic discourses. This discussion will demonstrate, in more detail, why the phrase has hitherto undeveloped potential for queering upwards growth and examine the scaffolding on which it, as an emerging structure of feeling, rests. Highlighting common associations, a Google image search for "growing sideways" delivers images of teeth and plants. According to these search results,[12] the phrase *growing sideways* denotes literal sideways movements of unruly wisdom teeth and of plants growing towards the sun, bent by wind, their own weight, or because of human interference. Here, growing sideways is deviant behaviour, potentially painful (teeth) and in need of correction, or the result of being subject to external pressures and manipulation. In the case of plants, growing sideways also is a survival strategy, to access nutrition (sun) or avoid breaking (by bending). The association of sideways growth with trees is also reflected in literature. Paraphrasing growing as "reaching", A. S. Byatt's novel for adults *The Children's Book* (2009) describes arboreal movement as occuring under duress: "There were trees that had been shaped by steady blasts of wind, stunted and reaching sideways. [. . .] They were a stationary form of violent movement" (2009/2010, p. 103). Understanding sideways as a similarly involuntary direction enforced by external pressures, but a direction not necessarily negating all agency, New Zealander Jay McNeill's memoir *Growing Sideways* (2011) connects arboreal and human growth:

> Where we lived on the coast of southern New Zealand, most of the trees grew sideways from the constant wind, straining to follow their genetic blueprint to grow upward, but failing dismally. [. . .] [T]he bent trees [. . .] would become imprinted in my mind as a symbolic visual analogy to my life as an adult. Just as that constant wind had sculpted those trees over decades, the wind in my life would sculpt a residual emotional posture that I would learn to accept and work with rather than fight. (2011/2015, p. 15)

[12] Search results may differ for other users. Google, as Eli Pariser notes in *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet Is Hiding from You* (2011), adapts results according to previously collected information on the user.

For both Byatt and McNeill, sideways growth denotes a failure to grow upwards – Byatt's trees are "stunted" and McNeill's are "failing dismally" – and an involuntary development shaped by external factors, such as literal (Byatt; McNeill) and metaphorical (McNeill) wind. Sideways growth, here, is an alternative to upwards growth but, even when applied to humans, not voluntarily chosen nor particularly positive or beneficial. It is something to "accept and work with" rather than to pursue and explore.

It is also useful to consider some connotations of the word *sideways*. Some idioms relate *sideways* to eye movement. *Looking at someone sideways* tends to be an expression of suspicion (cf. "Looking", n.d., n.pag.) and implies a capacity for critical thinking, for questioning the other person's statements or motives. *A sideways glance* may be caused by a suddenly piqued interest, indicating a sense of discovery, or or it may be an attempt to see without being seen. The former idiom lends *growing sideways* an air of an independent, critical perspective, ready and able to question grand narrative ideas of upwards growth. The latter idiom adds a willingness to explore, to be distracted from beaten upwards paths, and an element of secrecy, perhaps caused by embracing ways of being that are not widely accepted. Another idiom connects *sideways* with failure: when things *go sideways*, they 'go pear-shaped' (cf. "Go Sideways", n.d., n.pag.). This connotation links to common dictionary definitions of *sideways* as meaning "by an indirect way" and "from an unconventional or orthodox viewpoint" in everyday language use (cf. "Sideways", n.d., n.pag.). Whereas growing sideways can be perceived as a failure from the perspective of the grand narrative of upwards growth, I will build on Halberstam's re-evaluation of failure (2011) in Chapter Four to understand failures to conform to upwards growth as an unexpected movement that may be liberating and joyful.

Sideways is also often employed as an indication of unexpected and defiant movements in children's literature, which provides the main source of primary material for my research. That such usages in British children's literature occur before and within my

temporal scope suggests that there is a long tradition of conceptualising alternative choices as *sideways* for children. For example, the defiant confidence that John Masefield's children's novel *The Box of Delights or When the Wolves Were Running* (1935) bestows on *sideways* is a connotation that is worth claiming for growing sideways. In the novel, pirates "looked at him [the child protagonist Kay] slantwise, and spat sideways in a very crooked manner" (1935/1971, p. 183). Representing an alternative lifestyle, albeit not one validated by the central narrative, these pirates mark their disapproval of Kay, and, to extrapolate, their confidence in their own choices, sideways. I assert that growing sideways can be an act of defiance and a direction of growth that can confidently be owned and, moreover, expressed, whether verbally or, for example through clothes, non-verbally. In Lucy Boston's children's novel *The Children of Green Knowe* (1954), *sideways* describes obscure ways of relating. Toseland spends his school holidays at his grandmother's place Green Knowe for the first time, and realises that "he was only there [in the house] himself as if it were sideways, through his mother" (1954/1994, p. 112). Here, *sideways* denotes an indirect kinship and, because Toseland and his grandmother Mrs Oldknow share an understanding of the importance of playing in snow and the ability to interact with the ghost children who haunt Green Knowe, a connection between childhood and adulthood. Growing sideways, I propose, can involve unconventional behaviour or attitudes and allows for forging direct relationships in indirect ways. McCaughrean's novel *The Middle of Nowhere* (2013) illustrates that the adjective *sideways* even labels a space as less important, as offside: "Fred hovered by the door, standing sideways on because he was not part of the conversation" (2013/2014, p. 126). Although aboriginal child Fred is excluded from "the conversation" between his white adult boss and the boss's daughter, he is still able to hear it from his sideways position. Arguably, sideways can be a difficult space to occupy, especially if this occupation is not voluntary, yet it is a worthwhile space, within which one may experiment, and from which one may be rewarded with a different

perspective. People in sideways spaces can be both aware and critical of normative spaces. Just as Fred's sideways position is involuntary, people may also grow sideways involuntarily, because they are excluded from the grand marrative of growth because of their gender or other factors. However, for some, sideways can, of course, be the only way that works; for some crabs, because of where their legs are located and how their joints function (Weis, 2012, pp. 44, 95), sideways is the most effective way forwards. Vice versa, not everyone, if growing sideways involuntarily or unconsciously, will feel equally at home in sideways growth. Where upwards growth is less attainable, sideways may be a more effective or the only accessible way of growing.

In academic studies, *sideways* has been used to suggest unusual angles. Griffiths's *A Sideways Look at Time* (1999), while she never explicitly explains her word choice, is sideways because it aims to unsettle dominant conceptions of (masculine) time: her book presents "a broadside against *all* the misues of time in modern Westernized societies. And a manifesto for time to be seen as something more extraordinary, strange, sensual – even erotic – than our dominant definitions allow" (1999/2002, p. x). Slavoj Žižek's study *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (2008), "casts six sideways glances" at violence "[i]nstead of confronting violence directly", because "looking at the problem of violence awry" allows new perspectives (2008/2009, p. 3). Mirjam de Bruijn, Inge Brinkman, and Francis Nyamnjoh's collection *Side@Ways: Mobile Margins and the Dynamics of Communication in Africa* (2013) on mobile phone use in African communities associates *sideways* with "marginality in the sense that it concerns places and spaces 'at the sides' (not in the centre)", moving "'to the sides'", and "a form of solidarity, of moving together and moving towards others" (2013, p. 3). Roberto J. González and Rachael Stryker's collection *Up, Down, and Sideways: Anthropologists Trace the Pathways of Power* (2014), as they explain in their introduction, uses antrophologist Laura Nader's 'vertical slice' approach of "studying up, down, and sideways by seeking to locate and analyze the

connections between powerful institutions (particularly bureaucracies and corporations) and relatively powerless individuals" (2014/2016, p. 13) because "one needs to think up, down, and sideways to figure out an upside-down world" (p. 19). In the process, their collection aims "to rethink not just the scope of what is visible, but of what is ultimately possible" (p. 20). These studies indicate that *sideways* serves approaches that challenge dominant socio-cultural ideas, seek new perspectives on affective phenomena, explore society's margins and the communities that may form there, and connect different levels of power to expose patterns and possibilities in confusing times. In its own way, my approach in this thesis shares this imeptus.

Claiming these exemplary connotations of *growing sideways* and *sideways* for my concept, I propose that growing sideways is about unexpected, awkward, peculiar, surprising, non-normative, potentially threatening movements, which may be unplanned and unplannable, or defiantly confident choices. Growing sideways happens offside the main (grand narrative) conversation (of growth) and yet not in a vacuum – growing sideways can relate to and critique other directions of growth and offer different perspectives. Growing sideways describes growth that is not inevitably upwards or unidirectional and moves unexpectedly: in circles, waves, backwards and forwards, pausing, hesitating, accelerating, and decelerating:

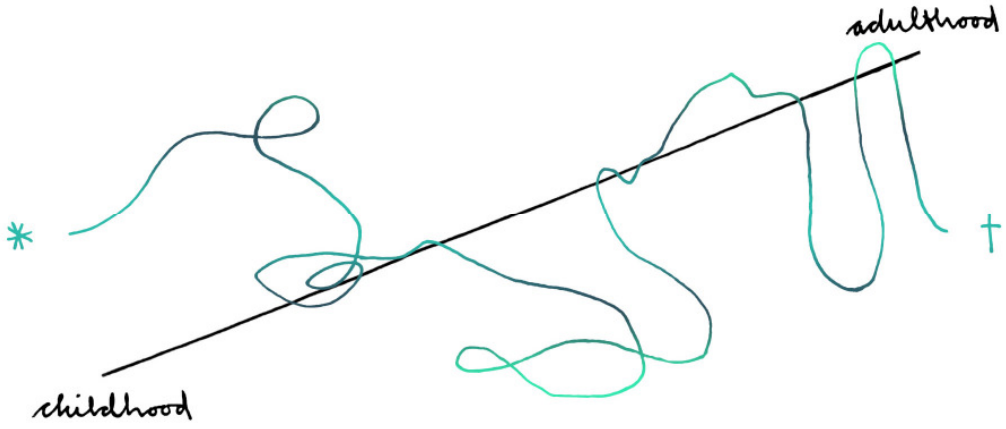

Figure 2. Diagram charting possibilities of sideways growth from birth to death in sea colours against the grand narrative of growth's upwards trajectory from childhood to adulthood (drawn by the author).

While sharing some similarities with a journey model of life-mapping, the line in colour maps the potential movements of an individual growing sideways (in a metaphorical sea) against the straight upwards (or uphill towards a plateau) trajectory of upwards growth. As suggested by the diagram, growing sideways moves (chaotically and disorderly) between childhood and adulthood, without blindly committing to or prioritising either; in fact, growing sideways disassociates from these rigid concepts. Another individual's sideways growth may share some loops with the one depicted in the diagram or move completely differently, for sideways growth can be collective and idiosyncratic – what works for one person may not work for another. Growing sideways is a wandering off chrononormative trajectories, curious experiments with other ways of growing, a pluralistic challenge of norms, plans, and definitions.

Working Definition

Condensing my discussion of pre-existing ideas of normative and alternative growth and of connotations of the phrase *growing sideways* and the word *sideways* into a working definition, my *growing sideways* encompasses: undesirable, avoidable, and multidirectional growth; slippages and connections between childhood and adulthood that challenge the notion of childhood and adulthood as certain and distinct categories bookending the grand narrative of growth; a variety of forms and degrees of sideways growth depending on context and factors such as gender. I elaborate on each of these points through close readings of examples from Meadows's *This Is England* cycle.

Growth as Undesirable, Avoidable (or Unattainable), and Multidirectional

As an alternative to normative growth – presented as desirable, inevitable, and upwards by the grand narrative of growth – growing sideways includes representations and experiences of growth as undesirable, avoidable (or unattainable), and multidirectional. In the *This Is*

England cycle, the protagonists find upwards growth undesirable and unattainable rather than desirable and inevitable: for them, rites of passage such as school leaving exams, getting a job, moving out, being promoted, getting married, and having children are uneasy or unsuccessful. For example, Shaun sleeps through his final exam and expects to fail his GCSEs. Immediately after this exam, his mother Cynthia introduces new responsibilities:

CYNTHIA: So what's the plan now then?

SHAUN: I'm not really sure, I mean, I was thinking Manchester and Liverpool, but I've heard that Derby is quite nice at this time of year. Now, I've decided to call it "Shaun's tour of England 1986"

CYNTHIA: [. . .] Shaun, I'm not getting you a bloody scooter. [. . .] I've made you an appointment [at the job centre] anyway.

[. . .]

SHAUN: Listen, mum, I've literally just finished my exams, I want a bit of freedom, I don't want to go straight to jail.

CYNTHIA: No, Shaun, you've finished school now, you've got to get a job, love. You're an adult. Your appointment's three o'clock and you'd better go 'cause I'll check. (S1E1, 07:09)

Shaun's wariness of entering the workplace, and adulthood, echoes a spatial metaphor employed by Wordsworth in his "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" (1804). For Wordsworth, approaching adulthood resembles "Shades of the prison-house begin[ning] to close / Upon the growing Boy" (1804/1807, n.pag.) because it entails a more limited perception of nature's splendour, as childhood feelings of joy are replaced by adult grief. Evoking imprisonment more literally than Wordsworth, Shaun conceives of adulthood not merely as "shades" of a prison-house but as the physical embodiment of a prison: a restrictive place of containment and punishment, a notion I explore further, also in relation to childhood, in Chapter Four. Imagining adulthood as a

prison juxtaposes the grand narrative idea of adulthood as: a desirable destination for everyone, a reward for leaving childhood, a place of choices and possibilities, and the most powerful place in aetonormative power structures. Cynthia's decision to steer and supervise Shaun's movements – "you'd better go 'cause I'll check" – confirms Shaun's suspicions about adulthood. Shaun is not encouraged to make independent decisions or stray from the expected path towards adulthood. As chrononormativity does not account for pauses such as a scooter trip, Shaun's new, post-exam adult status leads to another rite of passage: getting a job. However, reflecting that over three million people were unemployed in Britain in the middle of the 1980s ("The Thatcher Years in Statistics", 9 Apr. 2013, n.pag.), Shaun, like most of his friends, has to sign on for unemployment benefits (S1E2). Being unable to successfully master this rite of passage, he cannot afford his own place (S1E2; S1E3). In upwards growth, missing one step can complicate reaching another. Even protagonists who have jobs are not taking this rite of passage in their stride. Woody resents succeeding at his job, for being promoted involves moving into an in-between hierarchical position: he is either reluctantly kowtowing to his boss or reluctantly disciplining colleagues formerly on the same rung of the hierarchy as himself. Furthermore, the promotion limits his time with the gang: having time to play football becomes a rare occasion celebrated by Woody and his friends (S1E3). Being offered another promotion, Woody's gut reaction is a sideways glance: "You can fuck off" (S2E1, 14:18). Instead of gratefully accepting this opportunity as a further step towards financial independence and adult authority on a chrononormative upwards trajectory, Woody, although he immediately masks it as "a joke" (14:26) and "banter" (14:30), expresses his aversion to having yet another wedge placed between himself and his peers. Other milestone experiences are equally troublesome. Worried that marriage signifies growing up to become his father, conforming to conventional expectations, as I discuss in Chapter Two, Woody fails to say "I do" (S1E1, 25:46). Thereby, he sabotages this rite of passage

for his partner Lol. Her subsequent experience of parenthood is complicated – not only is she battling postnatal depression, she also has one child with Milky, Woody's best friend, and another with Woody. In short, growing up fails the protagonists just as they fail at growing up. The conventional expectations around growing up prove to be out of reach or dismiss who they are and what they want, forcing them to, in turn, dismiss their interests, tastes, and priorities. For the gang, growing up goes sideways: they fail to inevitably 'progress' from one rite of passage to another, up into adulthood.

Conventional rites of passage are so meaningless for the gang that they can be understood as *liminal personae*, a term Victor Turner uses to define "transitional beings [. . .] neither one thing nor another, or may be both; [. . .] at the very least 'betwixt and between' all the recognized fixed points in space-time of structural classification" (1987/1994, p. 7). These transitional beings, Turner notes, have "freedom to juggle with the factors of existence", but eventually have to move from this rite of transition into the rite of incorporation: "they have to become once more subject to custom and law" (p. 15). Instead of forcing its protagonists to leave liminality for incorporation and upwards growth, the *This Is England* cycle pluralises growth: failing upwards growth allows the protagonists to grow sideways collectively, as a gang, and individually. The protagonists gain a sense of belonging, self-worth, and security from forming a community across chronological ages, youth subcultures, ethnicities, and genders, instead of from mastering rites of passage or submitting to the expectations of their biological families. They overtly express their sideways growth (Meadows, 2010) and their mutual affection, either in hugs (Meadows, 2006) or verbally: "I love you man, for fuck's sake" (S2E3, 34:00). In the gang, Woody can be himself instead of having to mask knee-jerk reactions of aversion as banter, as he does at work, and twelve-year-old Shaun is taken seriously, even when beginning a romantic relationship with Smell, several years his senior (Meadows, 2006). Their community, which I discuss further as a family of choice in Chapter Three, is

presented as a valid alternative to upwards growth. While the protagonists sometimes pursue their own interests outside the gang, ultimately, they maintain their allegiance to it. For Don Pinnock, the failure to leave criminal gangs leads to value-negative negative "eternal liminality" (1997, n.pag.); in *This Is England*, gang community, if of a different kind of gang, is celebrated as a pocket of queer time and of sideways growth rather than abandoned for adulthood. In contrast to Pinnock's idea that gangs can trap their members in a state of eternal liminality, a trap that prevents them from incorporating into society, in Meadows's cycle, as I explore in Chapter Three and Chapter Four, the protagonists fare better in their gang. They embrace liminality rather than crossing child-adult boundaries upwards into adulthood. Valuing moratorium and friendship over careers and rites of passage into adulthood, the protagonists prefer 'wasting' time together, investing in their community through play, and inventing idiosyncratic rites of passage.

The cycle also demonstrates that growth is difficult to categorise. When Woody and Lol reunite after their relationship and, to some extent, the gang unravelled in the wake of their failed wedding, they phrase their decision in terms of growth:

> WOODY: I've been so lonely without you, you dick.
>
> LOL: Don't call me a dick
>
> WOODY: You are. We both are. I've got a mental idea, me. Why don't we fucking grow up?
>
> LOL: That sounds like a good idea. (S2E3, 39:56)

Only when Woody re-defines growing up to mean unconditional loyalty to loved ones instead of conventional rites of passage is it appealing to him. However, this decision to "grow up" is really a decision to grow sideways, for, rather than aiming for adulthood, Woody and Lol diverge from normative upwards growth. Their unconditional loyalty extends to, and reunites, their community, the gang (S2E3). Furthermore, they reinvent rites of passage to suit them: Woody, Lol, and Milky's patchwork parenting works

harmoniously (S3E1; S3E2) and Woody and Lol's eventual marriage prioritises love and community over ticking the expected boxes for proposals, venues, and dress: Woody proposes with an improvised playdough ring (S3E3), they celebrate in a miner's welfare club rather than the venue Woody's parents favour, and Lol is not wearing a conventional bridal dress (S3E4). *Growing up* so strongly denotes a certain set of ideas, expectations, and rules that it is difficult to reclaim it for alternative growth; hence, their experiences after deciding to 'grow up' are more suitably described as growing sideways.

While refusing to be limited and defined by upwards growth, sideways *growth* recognises that growth can be positive. As sideways growth embraces disturbing chrononormative, linear time in pursuit of other ways of being, such positive growth includes, for example, learning playful play as an adult. Furthermore, sideways growth need not reject all aspects of upwards growth – developing a sense of responsibility and (cognitive) empathy, for example, is essential for human beings. We need to take responsibility for our actions and be aware how they affect ourselves, other human beings, and other life forms on the planet. However, there are choices: choosing not to take on the responsibility of having children or getting married, for example, are as legitimate as choosing parenthood and marriage. Similarly, because growing sideways refuses to prioritise conventional paths, such as heterosexual, procreative, and romantic relationships, it renders other kinds of relationships (same-sex, non-sexual, non-romantic, childfree), and the choice not to be in a relationship, equally valid. Not requiring the completion of conventional rites of passage into adulthood, growing sideways allows for non-normative ways of connecting or disconnecting. Moreover, growing sideways can incorporate completing rites of passage that are embedded in upwards growth by changing these rites to ensure they are meaningful for individuals rather than socially and culturally legible.

Growing sideways embraces and celebrates slippages and connections that challenge the notion of childhood and adulthood as certain and distinct categories bookending the grand narrative of growth, for these categories are constructed, vague, and uninhabitable. Queering growth entails queering age categories: if growth is not linear, if time itself is rendered queer, so are the categories of childhood and adulthood. Growing sideways identifies and embraces ways of transcending these categories. Human beings can relate meaningfully, and on equal footing, across chronological ages, and chronological age need not dictate cultural practices that privilege some appearances, activities, and spaces over others.

Chronologically and legally, some of the protagonists are categorised as children and some as adults – yet they dance (Meadows, 2010; S3E1; S3E4), have fist fights with other gangs (S1E3), play dress-up (Meadows, 2006) and football (S1E3) together. They also rally around the hospital bed when one of their middle-aged members has a heart attack (S1E1). Their community establishes indirect, unorthodox sideways connections of kinship between the protagonists, and between childhood and adulthood. I examine these connections in more detail in terms of playfulness in Chapter Three, where I also suggest that growing sideways can be a source of power and provide the ability to thrive outside, contradict, and rebel against aetonormative power structures. Demonstrating that children are not 'less than', nor that different from, adults questions the justification of aetonormative power structures. Children and adults can form a community on equal footing and children can have power in the present, not just the future. Hence, queering categories of childhood and adulthood also affects the power dynamics between them.

Growing sideways re-evaluates ideas, particularly around appearance, play, and space, that are associated with the categories of childhood and adulthood. Hollindale's *childness* is an interesting term in this context because the qualities it denotes – dynamic, imaginative, experimental, interactive, and unstable – are not qualities exclusive to

children. To cite Lee, “imagination and creativity are human characteristics”, and “not the exclusive possession of children” (2001, p. 143). In the absence of another suitable umbrella term, it is, therefore, more useful to specifically name the qualities in question – for example to specifically discuss playfulness, which can also encompass dynamic, imaginative experimentation – rather than childness. Growing sideways agrees that both children and adults can be, for example, playful, creative, silly, imaginative, dynamic, fallible, irresponsible, stable, unstable, responsible, competent, incompetent, and authoritative. In line with Lewis’s notion of enrichment, growing sideways does not require “putting away childish things”, and, moreover, argues that there is no reason to consider them to be childish. Building on Segal’s *temporal vertigo* and Halberstam’s *queer time*, growing sideways posits that dividing between child(ish) and adult things or traits along a normative timeline of upwards growth can potentially be impossible, and, instead, allows for agefluid identities. Childhood and adulthood are not bookending all options of human growth: it is limiting to assume that, as we grow (up), we have to stop being children and become adults. Instead of aiming to re-evaluate or reclaim categories such as childhood and adulthood, growing sideways seeks alternative, more fluid options.

Queering both adulthood *and* childhood, growing sideways dissassociates from these categories. However, these categories remain neccessary terms for my discussion. Therefore, I use *childhood* and *adulthood* ‘under erasure’. Stuart Hall asserts that “put[ting] key concepts ‘under erasure’ [. . .] indicates that they are no longer servicable – ‘good to think with’ in their originary and unreconstructed form” but that, since they have not been or cannot currently be replaced by other concepts, “there is nothing to do but to continue to think with them – albeit now in their detotalized or deconstructed forms, and no longer operating within the paradigm in which they were originally generated” (1996/2015, p. 1). *Childhood* and *adulthood* work ‘under erasure’ in this thesis, as “idea[s] which cannot be thought in the old way, but without which certain key questions cannot be

thought at all" (Hall, 1996/2015, p. 2). To trace the changing boundaries between childhood and adulthood in twenty-first century Britain in a meaningful way, I need to use these categories, but do so with the emphasis that they are fallible constructions not true absolutes. This is a common convention in children's literature criticism, where *child* and *adult* are "always-already suspicious" and used "as workable concepts, in full awareness of their theoretical insufficiencies" (Beauvais, 2017, p. 267). Growing sideways explores the suspiciousness and insufficiencies of *child* and *adult* by suggesting that valuable growth can occur outside, between, and across these ghostly categories.

A Variety of Forms and Degrees

Growing sideways is theoretically available to everyone. In practice, not everyone is equally free to choose it. Sideways growth exists in a variety of forms and degrees depending on context and factors such as gender, because it does not occur in a vacuum. It moves within socio-cultural contexts and their respective dominant norms, expectations, institutions, written and unwritten rules, according to which different opportunities are available to the privileged. Choosing not to work in a profession that does not interest one, to work at all, to marry, to have children, or choosing to attend a pricey participatory event that encourages adults to pursue activities associated with children or enter spaces associated with children such as Camp Wildfire are not universal options. Their availability and desirability can depend on location, financial resources, education, class, race, gender, and sexuality.

Although the trailer for *This Is England '86* proposes that growing sideways is a choice, not every character has the same choices available to them. A working-class child, Shaun lacks the option to postpone getting a job after his GCSEs to go on what resembles a local version of the 18th century Grand Tour, a phase of travelling abroad for several years, principally to France and Italy, with which wealthy young British men concluded their

education (Jeremy Black, 1985/2011, p. v). Shaun seems to be both unable to delay adulthood and, because jobs are scarce, enter adulthood. After being unemployed and working in a shop, Shaun studies first drama and then photography and, thus, can either be seen to grow sideways because of his extended studies – Erikson considers academia to be a moratorium (1970, p. 160) – or because he studies towards a potentially unstable career instead of continuing to work. Shaun's sideways growth differs from his Woody's. In *This Is England '90*, Woody chooses to be a loving, chaotic stay-at-home father instead of accepting the job offer his parents have organised for him. He removes himself from one chrononormative trajectory, employment, and adjusts another, parenthood, to find it meaningful. Nevertheless, Woody's version of sideways growth is only possible because his partner Lol chooses to work in the kitchen of her former secondary school. Shouldering some of the responsibilities Woody avoids, Lol is less in touch with the rest of the gang and, for example, admits to not being "down with the kids" (S3E1, 27:15) with regard to the latest music trends they favour. For Lol, growing sideways takes another shape. When Woody reveals his anxieties about marriage, Lol suggests that getting married and becoming your parent need not be related phenomena, that rites of passage can be mastered without subscribing to conventional adulthood: "I am still a fucking skinhead at heart. Marriage isn't the problem here, Woody, you are" (S1E1, 31:14). Lol's sideways growth is about interior values, allegiances, and beliefs. The differences between Shaun and Woody's overt and Lol's covert sideways growth are symptomatic: Meadows's *This Is England* cycle focuses on male sideways growth. Although females are included in group shots, the narrative weight of individual storylines on successful sideways growth lies with males. Smell also studies a subject potentially leading to an unstable freelance career, art, but her story is sidelined by Shaun's. Trev is more present, yet mostly remains a sidekick without backstory. When female sideways growth is focused on, it tends to be negative. Lol struggles with parenthood and depression, and attempts suicide in *This Is England '88*,

and Kelly enters queer time by responding to family trauma with drug abuse in *This Is England '90*. These examples illustrate that choices around growth, particularly around rites of passage, are gendered even within representations of alternative growth. As conventional expectations of upwards growth are gendered, different things can be unconventional for females and males, with different consequences. For example, not having children and not shaving can be more unconventional choices for females than for males. If resisting temporal schemes of chrononormativity may come at a cost or place individuals out of legible time, making their bodies illegible, this endeavour can be doubly risky for less privileged bodies, in this case females. Sideways choices may be less available to females, or they are judged more harshly for making them. This might also explain why Melvin Burgess chose to transform his protagonist in *Lady: My Life as a Bitch* (2001) from an adolescent girl into a dog to portray her sexual desires and activities – they are so illegible within the grand narrative of growth that they remove her from the category of human altogether. Accepting her life as a dog also allows Sandra to avoid upwards growth, including stereotypical female roles such as "[c]oming home to the baby and doing more work, [. . .] years and years of [. . .] [n]appies and shit and exams and tests" (2001/2009, p. 196), which repels her: "I don't want to grow old. I don't want to go to work. I don't want to be responsible. I want to be a dog!" (p. 197). To grow sideways, females may have to make more radical decisions than males.

Aside from factors such as gender, sideways growth also comes in different degrees and versions according to individual decisions; unlike upwards growth, growing sideways does not prescribe how exactly it must be expressed to be legible. Growing sideways embraces all sorts of movements and developments, and can be a positive, valid, interesting, surprising way of being (and growing) outside grand narrative growth that is achievable in everyday life, not just in fiction, if to different degrees and in various shapes.

Conclusion: Growing Sideways as a Way of Noticing

My concept of *growing sideways* can be employed to identify and analyse a variety of individual instances and wider socio-cultural phenomena of non-normative growth that destabilise the categories of childhood and adulthood. Challenging the grand narrative of growth, growing sideways also challenges ideological structures around, for example, aetonormativity, chrononormativity, and sexism, and seeks to examine how contexts and factors such as gender affect the possibilities of non-normative growth available to individuals and groups. Articulating certain movements, choices, and practices as alternative growth, growing sideways can tell different stories than those told by the grand narrative of growth. It conceptualises non-normative decisions, behaviours, attitudes, activities, and movements as resistance to existing power structures and understands failing, refusing, re-defining, or inventing rites of passage as alternatives to chronormative trajectories into adulthood. In the process, growing sideways pluralises ideas of growth and validates other ways of being and growing. Growing sideways offers a unique concept for queering upwards growth and analysing non-normative growth.

Growing sideways disrupts various kinds of boundaries between childhood and adulthood, such as legal, cultural, social, and – my particular focus – bodily, vestimentary, behavioural, attitudinal, and spatial boundaries. As the trailer for *This Is England '86* demonstrates in a nutshell, growing sideways is often communicated through appearance, play, and space. In the following chapters, I refine my concept and demonstrate that growing sideways is a significant socio-cultural phenomenon, an emerging, alternative structure of feeling, by exploring how growing sideways can be expressed, experienced, and analysed in these conceptual areas in twenty-first century Britain. In the process, I will return to important examples from the *This Is England* cycle from my initial analysis in this chapter and analyse them in more detail within the contexts of appearance, play, and

space. I examine bodily and sartorial boundaries in the chapter on appearance, behavioural and attitudinal boundaries in the chapter on play, and spatial boundaries in the chapter on space. In these chapters, children take advantage of aetonormative power structures through projecting an adult appearance and prove that, alongside might, children can exert power in the present; adults (re-)claim childhood activities and spaces; children succeed in adult-dominated spaces; and people across age categories create their own spaces. In these and other ways, children and adults explore sideways growth through appearance, play, and space. Appearance is a suitable starting point for this endeavour because, both in everyday life and in fiction, appearance is often the first step in defining and categorising human beings along age boundaries.

Appearance

Passing | Cross-Dressing

The grand narrative of growth's child(hood)-adult(hood) binary, which privileges adults and adulthood, is perpetuated through appearance. Thomas Anstey Guthrie's novel *Vice Versâ: A Lesson to Fathers* (1882), published under the pseudonym F. Anstey, is a foundational example of conventional age-specific ideas around apperance. A fifty-something father, through an accidentally fulfilled wish, finds himself in the body of a boy, whereupon his son wishes himself into a body like his father's. Having, essentially, swapped bodies, the child runs his father's household and business and the adult is sent to boarding school in his son's place. Before swapping, each has unrealistic ideas of the other age category. While the child "enviously" thinks that it must be "unspeakably delightful [. . .] to be grown up" (1882/2008, p. 8), the adult fondly describes childhood in terms of "innocent games and delights" and school as "the very happiest time of their life" (p. 19). However, the father, for example, experiences his week at boarding school as "intolerable misery" (p. 272) and discovers that losing his adult body results in "his authority [being] set at nought" (p. 277); despite only having changed physically, not emotionally or intellectually, he is treated differently. Anstey's novel anticipates many later narratives in which child and adult characters swap bodies – such as American author Mary Rodgers' children's novel *Freaky Friday* (1972), which remains relevant also because of its twenty-first century film adaptations (Waters, 2003; Carr, 2018), and Carol Ann Duffy's short story "The Stolen Childhood" (2003) – and narratives in which child characters inhabit adult bodies without swapping with another person, such as American director Penny Marshall's film *Big* (1988). In these narratives, their appearance, more than any other trait, affects whether the protagonists are treated as children or adults by other characters.

Appearing to be an adult entails an increase in status for child characters but the reverse holds true for adult characters appearing to be children. An adult body, defined in these narratives through height, secondary sex characteristics, and particular types of clothing, confers a position of authority that is unattainable for a child's body. These narratives suggest that appearance marks a significant boundary between childhood and adulthood. Yet, the narratives also propose that appearance can be manipulated to challenge this boundary: changed physically, child characters assume adult positions and adult characters inhabit childhood. In the process, they gain an understanding of each other's experiences that, because the narratives depict children and adults as vastly different from one another, is unavailable without physically changing bodies.

In this chapter, I will argue that altering appearances can also be a way of expressing and facilitating sideways growth. Such alterations can affect power structures beyond the remit of literary narratives. To borrow a feminist catchphrase and one of its referents (see Hanisch, 2006, n.pag.), personal appearance is political. Appearance researchers Kate Gleeson and Hannah Frith argue that contemporary societies are "scopic econom[ies]", in which looking at (scoping) people's appearances determines their status, for some traits are valued over others (in Rumsey, & Harcourt, 2005, p. 3). Similarly, Berry notes that "we are stratified socially by our appearance, and this stratification denies and grants our access to power" (2008, p. 23): preferred traits such as being "white, tall, thin, with Northern European features, free of disabilities, and young" (p. vii) provide access to economic and social power, for example education, employment, marriage, and social networks. Where human beings appear to fall within identity categories such as gender, sexuality, class, race, and, of course, age, in turn, influences how they are treated and what options they have. In twenty-first century Britain, appearing to be an adult provides more access to, for instance, political, economic, and cultural power (if, in some circumstances, less governmental support) than appearing to be a child. As growing

sideways embraces slippages and connections between childhood and adulthood, and challenges aetonormative power structures, using appearance to express or facilitate sideways growth complicates these power positions differently than the narratives discussed above. For example, I will examine the child protagonist Liam from Boyce's children's novel *Cosmic* (2008), who purposefully appears to be an adult to benefit from that privileged position without, however, articulating a desire to grow up and, as a result of his endeavour, achieves a more balanced understanding of children's and adults' abilities and shortcomings. This feat does not require magically swapping or changing his body, which implies that Boyce presents age categories as less fixed than narratives such as Anstey's.

Unorthodox sideways connections are encouraged by appearance itself being, as Samantha Holland suggests in her study of alternative femininities, a "slippery" (2004, p. 2) subject matter. The word *appearance* encompasses a range of meanings from 'the way something or someone looks' to 'an act of performing or arriving' as in the phrases *keeping up appearances* and *making an appearance* ("Appearance", n.d., n.pag.). In philosophy, *appearance* is also studied in juxtaposition to *reality* (see Rescher, 2010, p. vii). Curiously, early and contemporary appearance studies such as J.C. Flügel's *Psychology of Clothes* (1930), Paul Schilder's *The Image and Appearance of the Human Body* (1935), Nicola Rumsey and Diana Harcourt's *Psychology of Appearance* (2005), and Bonnie Berry's *Power of Looks: Social Stratification of Physical Appearance* (2008) do not define the word *appearance*. The two contemporary studies, perhaps because they allow for more ambiguous meanings by exploring how appearance can be altered to transcend social hierarchies of attractiveness, occasionally preface the word *appearance* with the adjectives *outward* (Rumsey, & Harcourt, p. xiii) or *physical* (Berry, p. vii; Rumsey, & Harcourt, p. 1) to narrow its potential meanings. In contrast, I seek to open up the meanings of *appearance* in order to explore its subversive potential in relation to

growth, childhood, and adulthood, arguing that where meanings are slippery, boundaries may be crossed unexpectedly and vice versa; where boundaries are crossed unexpectedly, definitions slip alongside masks and expectations. Thus, I embrace the nuances of the word *appearance*, choosing to discard descriptors such as *physical* or *outward*, and build on its etymological history. In its 14th century Middle English incarnation *aparaunce*, the noun's meanings include 'visible form', '[m]ere [. . .] show [. . .] lacking reality, truth or honesty', 'the act of conjuring' and even, as *maken aparaunce*, to 'raise a specter' ("Ap(p)araunce", n.d., n.pag.). In light of this semiotic potential, I use *appearance* to refer to the ways bodies and clothes are perceived and projected. I examine bodies and clothes, not as relatively stable entities to be looked at and easily interpreted, but as ambiguous constructions. Such constructions are *perceived* rather than *seen* or *looked at* because this verb indicates that appraising appearances is a subjective form of interpretation that involves several senses, even while I primarily discuss ways of looking. I employ *projected* because I argue that appearance is malleable to an extent, and can be chosen or "conjured". That distinction is crucial for an investigation of growing sideways as appearances can be perceived and projected with unexpected results.

This ambiguity is possible in part because of the semiotic relationship between appearance and age. Based on biological 'facts' and a strong socio-cultural consensus that the bodies and clothes of children and adults differ, appearance serves as a fundamental signifier through the perception of which human beings position each other in age categories. While it can be difficult to judge chronological age correctly, people are constantly, quickly, and confidently categorised as either child or adult via their appearance. These categorisations, as I suggested at the outset, have serious consequences and are not always easily made. Therefore, appearance is a flawed signifier: appearances are unreliable and can be interpreted differently by different people. A short person in brightly coloured clothes may not necessarily be a child and a tall person with facial hair

may not necessarily be an adult (or even male). Describing linguistic signs, de Saussure notes that "[t]he bond between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary" because the relationship between a word and the concept that it evokes is "unmotivated" (1959/2004, p. 62). According to de Saussure, the implications of this relationship between signifier and signified are often underestimated but are, in fact, tremendous with "numberless" consequences (p. 62), for, by assuming the bond between words and concepts to be motivated, people subscribe to certain meanings and "disregard whatever others might be imagined" (p. 61). Applied to the relationship between appearance and age, de Saussure's observation suggests that if certain types of bodies and clothes are perceived to evoke certain age categories, then other connections, possibilities, and nuances of growth, and of communicating age, may be (dis-)missed. I argue that appearance, being slippery in varied and arbitrary ways, but strongly connected to age and growth, offers possibilities of unexpectedly crossing age boundaries.

By analysing changing boundaries between childhood and adulthood through appearance, this chapter contributes to appearance research and turn-of-the-twenty-first century debates of blurring age categories. These two discourses have, to date, only overlapped in passing. Appearance research occasionally mentions changes in age categories, without analysing them in depth. Flügel observes that an ideal of immaturity, or youth, is replacing that of maturity in adults' clothes and hairstyles in post-World War I Britain (1930/1971, pp. 151-159), while contemporary appearance researchers discuss the socio-cultural value of a youthful appearance for adults (cf. Rumsey, & Harcourt, 2005, p. 5; Berry, 2008, p. 103). In turn, debates of blurring age boundaries consider appearance briefly. In the 1980s, Postman worries that the physical appearances of children and adults "are becoming increasingly indistinguishable" in America (1982/1994, p. 4), and Meyrowitz claims that "the era of distinct clothing for different age-groups has passed" (1984, p. 20). In a 2006 article, Furedi criticises British thirty-somethings for wearing

merchandise from the television cartoon series *The Simpsons*, claiming that adults are "hanging on to the habits of children rather than admit they're aging" (24 Aug. 2006, n.pag.). Suggesting that these two discourses can inform each other meaningfully and, moreover, reveal a bigger picture together, my research contributes to both fields and, reaching beyond their individual frames, combines them to study appearance as a dimension of growing sideways.

Moreover, I explore the meanings of appearance by drawing on insights from queer theory. Elaborating on my proposition from Chapter One that *child* and *adult*, like gender categories, are uninhabitable subject positions, I argue that age, as Judith Butler showed for gender, is performative. Gender is performative in the sense that it is not a fact but a construction created, upheld, and naturalised by a repeated performance of acts, in discourse and by individuals, which command the body to become "a cultural sign", to "materialize itself" in limited ways ("disregarding" others, as de Saussure would assert) and "under duress" (Butler, 1990, p. 139). Although stating that gender is a "cultural fiction" (1990, p. 140) and herself allowing for a fluidity of identities (1990, p. 138) and "multiple identification" (1993, p. 99), Butler argues that it is "a regulatory fiction" (1990, p. 141), where performance is mandatory and has "clearly punitive consequences", for "we regularly punish those who fail to do their gender right" (1990, pp. 139-140). This fiction also privileges males: it "accounts for female development through the rationale of biology" and, therefore, "argue[s] that women ought to perform certain social functions and not others" and "ought to be fully restricted to the reproductive domain" (Butler, 1993, p. 33). Just as Althusser observes that one can never be outside of ideology (1971/2008, pp. 49-50), Butler contends that people are always already implicated and produced by gender (1990, p. xvi). Although performance is mandatory and punitive, and individuals are always already implicated by gender, subversion is possible through acts that expose gender as "an imitation without an origin[al]" (Butler, 1990, p. 138), a construction.

Individuals can choose not *if* but *how* to repeat acts and, thus, "force [oppressive and painful gender norms] to resignify" and "work the trap that one is inevitably in" (Butler, 1992, p. 84). Applying Butler's observations to age, I propose that age-related expectations of bodies and clothes are socio-culturally entrenched and naturalised by repeated performances. With both gender and age, appearance is frequently the first instance of performance. While gender seems natural but is constructed, age categories are vague and uninhabitable, and appearance is slippery but a coercive instrument perpetuating established power structures. As age-related expectations of bodies and clothes are not fact, they require constant reinforcement and, thus, are similarly open to flaws and "failure[s] to repeat" (Butler, 1990, p. 141), and can be made to re-signify.

In this chapter, I use Butler's notion of gender performativity to examine how appearance can be used to perform age differently through two strategies embedded in queer theory: passing, previously used to describe the ability to oscilliate between different communities in terms of race and sexuality, and cross-dressing, previously used to denote wearing clothes that are socio-culturally deemed inappropriate in terms of gender and sexuality. These strategies intersect because cross-dressing can aid passing and the ability to pass can affect cross-dressing, even if the cross-dresser has no desire to pass. First, I focus on height in the section on passing and, second, on clothes in the section on cross-dressing to address elements of appearance that are less and more easily malleable, respectively. Across the two sections, I examine representations of height and items of clothing in a range of texts, including Jackson's short story for adults "The Button Thief" (2005), McCaughrean's children's novel *Peter Pan in Scarlet* (2006), Meadows's *This Is England* cycle (2006–2015), Boyce's *Cosmic* (2008), Hart's television series *Miranda* (2009–2015), series five to seven of Steven Moffat's *Doctor Who* (2010–2013), Levi Pinfold's picturebook *Black Dog* (2011), Laura Dockrill's children's novel *Darcy Burdock* (2013), Frances Hardinge's young adult novel *Cuckoo Song* (2014), Oliver Refson and

Lilah Vandenburgh's sitcom *Uncle* (2014–2017), Waller-Bridge's sitcom *Crashing* (2016), and Maudie Smith and Paul Howard's picturebook *The Dressing-Up Dad* (2017). The examples I highlight from this primary material address altering appearances in ways that disrupt age boundaries, and occasionally gender norms. Spanning different genres, media, target audiences, and years, this primary material further indicates that growing sideways through appearance is a pervasive, complex concern that challenges perceptions of childhood and adulthood as meaningful categories.

Passing

Bodies are physical entities that signify boundaries. Arguing that society produces, controls and rejects bodies, Judith Butler describes the body as "a set of boundaries, individual and social, politically signified and maintained" in *Gender Trouble* (1990, p. 33) and as "a movement of boundary itself" in *Bodies that Matter* (1993, p. xi). If boundaries serve to divide territories, bodies act as boundaries between one's inner self and appearance, between oneself and the environment, between oneself and other beings. With the possible exception of death and out-of-body experiences, we cannot escape our bodies; they are boundaries that move with us. In terms of age performativity, I argue that conventional perceptions of particular traits as either child- or adult-specific shape bodily age boundaries. For example, children are conventionally expected to be shorter, have less body hair and less developed secondary sexual characteristics than adults. These bodily boundaries move. As children grow into adults, their bodies change because of biological developments and socio-culturally expected appearance rituals such as gender-specific pressures to remove body hair. Some changes are more hidden than others; menarche and emerging pubic hair, for example, are less immediately obvious than an increase in height. Bodies also are moving boundaries in the transitive sense of the verb. Bodily changes, over

time, virtually move human beings across the boundary between childhood and adulthood and, hence, mark growth. Drawing on philosopher Martin Heidegger's work, Beauvais states that "[a] child growing up is not *subjected to* the passing of time; its elongating limbs and developing existence *are* the passing of time." (2015, p. 24, emphasis in original). Bodies are seen as 'clocks' by which human beings tell physical, emotional, and intellectual growth (as well as the 'right' time for procreation and other chrononormative trajectories). Elongating limbs are read according to growth charts, which correlate height and chronological age, even as human bodies grow at different speeds. Bodily events such as menarche are interpreted as rites of passage and, thus, assumed to indicate complementary emotional and intellectual development, even as these bodily events can occur within a range of years. However, bodily boundaries can move in unexpected ways, particularly in relation to power dynamics. bell hooks notes that bodies are "playgrounds" for those in power (1992, p. 23); similarly, Judith Butler speaks of "the power relations that contour bodies" (1993, p. 17). For example, many parents for years steer decisions around their children's bodies, with varying degrees of success, including haircuts, bedtimes, food intake, medication, and exercise, all of which may affect appearance, shaping their children's bodies. Jacqueline Wilson's children's novel *Cookie* (2008) reflects such struggles between the girl protagonist and her father who frequently polices her appearance, for example criticising her weight by commenting that "she's getting ginormous" (2008/2009, p. 10) and insisting she curl her hair for a birthday party even if the rollers hurt because "[y]ou girls have to suffer a bit for your looks" (p. 60). His gendered ideas of her appearance are punitive but have limited reach – Cookie and her mother eat treats in secret and Cookie's hair uncurls in the pool at the party. Bodies can also become playgrounds for those not in power, a way of staging resistance. In Margo DeMello's words, bodies are "both the site for the inscription of power and the primary site of resistance to that power" (2007, p. 128). For example, Joosen observes that children's

literature both "evoke[s] [adult bodies] as powerful, admirable and comforting because of their size and strength" and, countering child characters' "sense of powerlessness" through disgust as "an effective way of self-confirmation and self-empowerment", "piti[es] and mock[s]" adult bodies, especially "signs of ageing (balding, sagging skin, wrinkles) and post-pubescent features" such as androgenic body hair (2018, pp. 100-101). I will focus on representations that locate power-related tensions within the protagonists' own bodies. Being arbitrary but widely accepted signifiers of age and growth, and playgrounds of aetonormative power relationships, bodies provide rich material for disruptions of discourses of conventional upwards growth.

Passing is a significant concept in the context of moveable bodily boundaries and power dynamics. According to Jessa Lingel, the act of passing "means to be able to assume (either actively or passively) membership within multiple communities" (2009, p. 382). Lingel's definition avoids the pejorative connotations of others that describe passing primarily as "a deception" (R. Kennedy, 2001, p. 1). While, in "a larger social narrative", "passing encompasse[s] cross-dressing, class-jumping and age-faking, and myriad other combinations of adopting or abdicating characteristics of religion, culture, age, class and ethnicity" (Lingel, 2009, p. 391), previous studies have predominantly focused on race-based and sexuality-based passing. Maintaining Lingel's neutral definition in order to analyse its potentially liberating possibilities, and including the connotation of "adopting or abdicating chracteristics" of age for a more fluid concept, I will draw on insights from studies on other types of passing as a framework for discussing two aspects of age-based passing. First, even when their bodies can conform to the conventional expectations for their age category, people may experience, to borrow Österlund's definition of *queer aging*, an "awkward feeling of not being at ease with the age [they] biologically occupy" (2014, p. 35), and use their bodies in ways that queer their age category. For example, they may "adopt" or "abdicate" some conventional ideas about their age category that their

body, metonymically, evokes. Second, when their bodies do not conform to conventional expectations for their age category, people may not, in all circumstances, be able to pass for the age category they chronologically and legally inhabit. They can potentially use this irregularity to move their bodies across age boundaries to actively pass for another age category. I will explore examples of how these two aspects of age-based passing can constitute sideways growth, and whether such possibilities are gendered, through fictional representations of height.

Height, meaning a human being's measurement from head to foot on a continuum between short and tall, is an obvious difference in child and adult appearances: children tend to be shorter than adults, adults tend to be taller than children. Conventionally, height signifies age categories and growth. As children are growing taller, they can be seen to grow *up*, as noted in Chapter One, in the sense of crossing age boundaries. An individual's physical growth is so widely relied on to signify the progress of other types of growth that this is even parodied in Travers's description of Mary Poppins's habit of measuring children's heights with a measuring tape to gauge not their height, but their behavioural development and their emotional upwards growth (1944/1966, pp. 31-32). As the height difference between children and adults is invested with aetonormative "appearance bias" (Berry, 2008, p. 2), which constructs certain traits as superior (Berry, 2008, p. 23), height further signifies power. Although being short and being tall both have advantages and disadvantages, a socio-cultural appearance bias suggests that, within reason (see Vallone, 2017), being tall is superior to being short. This bias is evident in the word *height* itself. *Height* is an umbrella term encompassing both *short* and *tall* but is more readily associated with the latter because it is phonetically similar to *high*, which like *tall*, denotes measurements above average. This indication of appearance bias is not the only reason I chose *height* over other terms, such as *size*. *Size* is often used interchangeably with *height*, for instance in the title of Stephen S. Hall's *Size Matters: How Height Affects the Health,*

Happiness, and Success of Boys – and the Men They Become (2006), and is the term employed by children's literature critics such as David Rudd (2013, p. 34). Yet *size* also suggests circumference and clothing measurements, neither of which are pertinent to this section of the chapter. Bias towards being tall exists in language more broadly. *Looking down on* and *looking up to* imply that people shorter than oneself are less and people taller than oneself more worthy of respect. Furthermore, the connotations of *short*, as in to *be short of*, *come short*, or *be taken short*, are more damaging for the subject in the sentence than *tall*'s positive connotations, as in *to stand tall*, and even its more negative connotations such as *tall stories* or *tall order*. These phrases reflect widely-held attitudes; for example, being tall is associated with being more intelligent, dependable and in charge (S. S. Hall, 2006, p. 15). As children tend to be shorter than adults, this appearance bias towards being tall works in favour of adults and has an aetonormative dimension, indicating that children are also metaphorically 'less than' adults (short of, even), that adults are more complete, powerful, and the norm, and that growing UP (physically, intellectually, and emotionally) to become an adult is preferable to being a child. The question "What do you want to be when you grow up?", if taken literally, as "What do you want to be when you grow tall?", indicates that children have fewer opportunities and that this is potentially related to their height. This sentiment is even more explicit in other languages, in which the same question employs adjectives more obviously meaning 'tall', such as German "Was willst du werden wenn du *groß* [tall] bist?", French "Qu'est-ce tu veux faire quand tu seras *grand* [tall]?", and Swedish "Vad vill du bli när du blir *stor* [tall]?" This aetonormative bias towards being tall perpetuates the grand narrative of growth.

Canonical texts of children's literature that explore height through adjectives such as *short*, *small*, *tiny*, *little*, *tall*, *large*, and *big*, and nouns such as *size*, reflect this bias. In Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), Alice experiments with different

heights and their corresponding levels of influence. Towards the end of her adventure, she finds that being tall equals influence: "she had grown so large in the last few minutes that she wasn't a bit afraid of interrupting [the King]" (1865/1998, p. 106). Overtaking the monarchs in height, Alice confidently questions a king's line of argument and refuses to comply with royal orders to leave or be quiet (pp. 104-107). However, her adventure, as I note in Chapter One, is a dream Alice wakes from: she is restored to her original height and, therefore, it is implied she re-enters established power structures. Recognising some advantages of being shorter but, ultimately, reverting to height bias, Masefield's children's novel *The Box of Delights* (1935) allows its child protagonist Kay to alter his height via said box and discover that, while being tiny is useful for spying, it removes agency: "Now I shall be tiny, like this, unable to help those people" (1935/1971, p. 234). In Roald Dahl's *Matilda* (1988), adults base their verbal abuse, dislike, and cruel treatment of children on their height. Her father calls Matilda "an ignorant little squirt" (1988, p. 19) and Miss Trunchbull takes personal offence at her students' height: "I don't like small people [. . .]. They should be kept out of sight in boxes like hairpins and buttons" (pp. 144-145).[13] While Matilda's intellectual superiority to some adults relieves aspects of her disadvantaged power position – "Being very small and very young, the only power Matilda had over anyone in her family was brain-power" (p. 43) – she needs an adult, Miss Honey, to escape her family. Similar observations of height-power relationships are made in miniature literature. Even where these texts challenge normative notions of height as a signifier of age, power, and growth, they mostly conclude that taller beings are more powerful than shorter beings. If, as Bertrand Russell notes, "the main instinctive urge of childhood" is "the desire to become an adult, or, perhaps more correctly, the will to power" (1926, p. 77), these kinds of representations render upwards growth desirable and support a signifying

[13] In Danny DeVito's American film adaptation *Matilda* (1996), this sentiment is conveyed more bluntly by Matilda's father: "I'm smart, you're dumb; I'm big, you're little; I'm right, you're wrong; and there's nothing you can do about it" (15:34). In another scene, Miss Trunchbull reinforces this view: "I'm big and you're small and I'm right and you're wrong and there's nothing you can do about it" (52:00).

chain of height–age–growth–power. Twenty-first century British texts disrupt this signifying chain to varying extents. I will highlight some pertinent examples of representations of short and tall characters that illuminate aspects of age-based passing before closely examining Boyce's children's novel *Cosmic*. These representations suggest that height need not be an instrument of upwards growth: it can be re-imagined or used to grow sideways by transcending one's own age category and blurring age boundaries.

Nothing Short of Brilliant: Queering Age Categories and Upwards Growth

Some texts imbue being short with unconventional meanings through representations of short children that queer the age category of child. In the tradition of John Burningham's picturebook *Avocado Baby* (1982), the male baby protagonist of Simon James's *Baby Brains* picturebook series (2004–2007) disturbs conventional expectations that relate the short height of infants with vulnerability and inability. Whereas Burningham's baby protagonist becomes strong enough to defeat a burglar, move furniture, and push a car by eating avocado pears, James's Baby Brains is surprisingly intelligent: he is a medical doctor by the chronological age of two in *Baby Brains* (2004), masters several musical instruments in *Baby Brains Superstar* (2005), and builds a robot to relieve his parents of household chores in *Baby Brains and Robomum* (2007). Both authors frequently emphasise the height of their baby protagonists in their illustrations, where they are depicted, to comic effect because this exaggerates the unexpectedness of their abilities, as shorter than other child characters, adult characters, and many objects they master. Neither character is confined or defined by their age category or their height: they can be as, sometimes more, capable than adults. While these picturebooks suggest that physical and intellectual growth can be achieved irrespective of chronological age, both protagonists are presented as individual exceptions to aetonormative rules. Furthermore, James's picturebooks culminate in the baby expressing an emotional need for his mother, reasserting a sense of children's

dependency on adults. In comparison, the protagonist of Jackson's short story for adults "The Button Thief" (2005) is almost as young, not "much more than a toddler" (2005/2006, p. 157), and short, "only a couple of feet" tall (p. 157), but female. Contrary to the male baby protagonists, Thelma Newton has a full name and and an approach to growth that is overtly described. Instead of expecting or desiring to grow up entirely, Thelma merely "hopes" to grow up "some" (p. 157) because she is able to challenge the levels of power conventionally ascribed to children. She chooses to layer her clothing so that she is "almost as wide as she [is] tall" (p. 157), indicating that she is determined to take up space and assert her agency. She is a more tenacious and effective problem-solver than the adult characters. When her parents refuse to take her to retrieve her button from the horse who stole it, she borrows motorcycle gloves to aid her search and goes by herself: "Nobody seemed particularly bothered by the sight of such a small girl marching up the road without an adult. Perhaps the big gloves gave her some sort of authority. She certainly strode along with plenty of purpose." (p. 161). The gloves evoke a (male) adult mode of transport often associated with adventures, races, and gangs, and, therefore, risk. Although they "perhaps" provide Thelma with authority, Thelma's manner of carrying her short body, "striding" purposefully, more effectively explains why her roaming adult-free does not alert other adults. Furthermore, she confronts the horse's owner who "wasn't used to having people of Thelma's size knocking on his front door" (p. 165), and eventually succeeds in retrieving her button and declaring the horse a "BUTTON THIEF" through having warning signs installed (p. 173). Unlike James's picturebooks, Jackson's story provides its female protagonist with more attainable advantages: she outperforms (parents), confronts (owner), and steers (signs) adults because of her determined attitude rather than extraordinary intelligence. Thelma asserts herself through how she uses her short body and, able to do so productively in ways that disturb aetonormative power dynamics in her

favour, can afford to develop an idea of growth that moves sideways rather than inevitably upwards.

The children's novel *Tall Story* (2010) by Candy Gourlay, born in the Phillipines and based in Britain, does not contrast its child protagonists' abilities with those of adults and, thus, less directly engages with upwards growth and yet contends that "height isn't everything" (2010/2011, p. 15). It unsettles conventional expectations around height by juxtaposing eight-foot-tall, sixteen-year-old Bernardo and his thirteen-year-old half-sister Andi, frequently described as "small" (p. 203). When Bernardo moves in with Andi's family in London, his height allows him easily to join a basketball team, although his body is weak: he is "so clumsy" he "can't even run" (p. 75, cf. p. 252). His awkwardness traps him in the age category of child, for he is less physically able than his younger sister, rather than allowing him to transcend it. Despite being more skilled than Bernardo, Andi is not considered to be "basketball-player material" on account of her height (p. 25, cf. 38), and is prevented from joining his basketball team due to her gender (p. 90). However, Gourlay links the concepts of height and passing through gender. During an important game, Andi passes for a boy thanks to her "straight and flat" (p. 261) body and the team's uniform and is celebrated because of her "'magic three-pointers'" (p. 263, cf. ch. 10), making up for her lack in height through her skill. Moreover, Andi is "really strong" (p. 68) from basketball training and so energetic that Bernardo "sometimes felt like *she* was taller than *me*" (p. 204, emphasis in original). The position conventionally inferred from Andi's height does not equal her abilities and she is able to grow sideways through physical training. James, Jackson, and Gourlay complicate upwards growth and its aetonormative child-adult binary through child protagonists for whom being short is neither an advantage, except in the sense that others may underestimate them, nor a disadvantage.

In contrast, Pinfold's picturebook *Black Dog* (2011) presents clear advantages of being short and more forcefully tips ideas of growth sideways. In *Black Dog*, being tall and being short are juxtaposed conventionally and unconventionally. Mr Hope, Mrs Hope, and two of their three children anxiously hide from a dog whose height they have exaggerated with each sighting, from Tiger to Tyrannosaurus Rex to "Big Jeffy" (2011/2012, n.pag.). The latter term indicates that, because the dog's height requires new imaginary measuring units, it is growing to a height conceivable only in the family's imagination; nevertheless the illustrations support the words as the dog visually dominates the pages. The youngest and shortest family member, called "Small (for short)", pronounces her terrified elders "sillies" and leads the dog through a carefully orchestrated chase, in which the dog shrinks considerably as it follows her across thin ice, through tight slides, and a cat flap. In a sense, the dog grows sideways by adjusting its height to succeed in certain spaces instead of plateauing at a fixed level of upwards growth that leaves no flexibility for changing spaces. Taking another perspective, Small uses the idea that certain spaces encourage certain kinds of growth, which I explore further in Chapter Four, to alter the dog's height by tricking it into specific spaces. As a result of this change in height, the Hope family accepts the dog. Thus, Pinfold suggests that height signifies power through the fear the tall dog inspires in the comparatively short family, but contests this assumption by demonstrating that Small, the shortest character, can exert power over that dog, ultimately actively *shrinking* it to a non-frightening height. As she accomplishes this transformation by leading the dog through places where being short is an advantage, Small succeeds in growing sideways not despite her height but by using her height to her benefit. In the process, Pinfold exposes height as an arbitrary signifier and redistributes height-related power. The family's heights correlate with their chronological ages, but not with their power positions, emotional, or intellectual growth. Tall adults (Small's parents) are vulnerable and irrational; a short child (Small) outsmarts both the dog and the adults. In doing so, Small queers the age category

(child) that her chronological age and height place her in by proving that neither her height nor that age category limit her. Being a short child is far from being 'less than' a tall adult. Hence, children may have not just *might* in the future, in Beauvais's terms as discussed in Chapter One, but also *authority* in the present. If being short and a child can already be a position of power, and if adults can be helpless and vulnerable, perhaps growing tall and up is not that necessary or desirable. If growing up is not as pressing a need, there is room for growing sideways.

Jackson, Gourlay, and Pinfold are less apologetic about depicting short child characters as powerful than James: they avoid reasserting established power structures, and their characters' advantages stem from determination, learned skills, and less extravagant intelligence than Baby Brain's. That these less apologetic characters are female also complicates gendered notions of height, as exemplified by Kyo Maclear's observation that "[g]ood girls are taught to make [themselves] small" (2017, p. 70). Each in their own way, Thelma, Andi, and Small authoritatively take up space. Thelma excudes authority through the way she carries herself and influences adults, and, as a result, retrieves her belongings and exerts revenge upon the thief. Andi's authority stems from her expertise on basketball, which allows her confidently to exceed child and adult expectations of her performance. In turn, Small asserts common sense over irrational fears by taking charge of a situation her parents feel overwhelmed by; Small's actions are also motivated by defending her family (if mostly from itself) and, thus, blur traditional adult gender roles of caring for (female) and protecting (male) family. This suggests that growing sideways can be a way of combining aspects of not only childhood and adulthood but also femininity and masculinity, and, moreover, that growing sideways can benefit individuals *and* communities.

If being short can be re-imagined as powerful on its own terms and, therefore, renders upwards growth less urgent, ideas of being tall and grown-up shift alongside.

Hart's sitcom *Miranda* (2009–2015) suggests that growing too tall means bypassing conventional ideas of maturity and, like Gourlay's *Tall Story*, links height to gender-based passing. The female adult protagonist Miranda is in her mid-thirties and taller than most of the other adult characters (see S2E1, 25:46). Having grown extraordinarily tall, Miranda might be expected to be extraordinarily grown up but feels decidedly queer within conventional adulthood. First, Miranda does not exhibit qualities often associated with adulthood. For example, she is perceived as struggling with romantic relationships and her career, especially by her mother whom Miranda describes as "tr[ying] to marry me off" (S1E1, 00:16) and "put[ting] me under pressure to get a proper job" (S1E3, 00:15). Second, being tall renders Miranda physically clumsy: she repeatedly falls over (see S1E1 05:26, 05:33, 22:35, 26:16; S1E2, 03:44; S2E1, 25:26). Even if she is not as pathologically clumsy as Bernardo in Gourlay's novel, she nonetheless wobbles and "waggles about", to borrow Wells's term from Chapter One, physically and within her age category. Finally, Miranda's height subverts traditional, gendered notions of romantic relationships. Albeit being a cis-gender woman, Miranda fails to pass for her gender category and, because of her height, is frequently mistaken for a man (S1E1). Even when she wears a dress specifically to avoid misgenderings, she is told she "could pass" (S1E1, 20:34) for a woman: "I wear normal everyday clothes, I get called Sir. I actually make an effort, I am a transvestite" (S1E1, 21:26). Gender and height can intersect in affecting people's ability to pass but failing to pass for a gender can also be liberating, if it encourages individuals to define themselves less rigidly, potentially also with regard to other identity categories. Genderqueer American activist and model Rain Dove, who has also often been mistaken for male, argues that failing to pass does not invalidate people themselves: "My birth certificate has an F on it and I say that's for 'fails to pass'. I just wish people knew that you don't have to 'pass' as a gender to pass as yourself" (2018, p. 32). Even when passing for female, Miranda does not conform to socio-cultural expectations of femininity and

masculinity according to which women are expected to be shorter than men. Pinpointing this expectation, the transgender girl protagonist of Lisa Williamson's young adult novel *The Art of Being Normal* (2015) is concerned about growing two centimetres in under two weeks, mirroring her father's sudden growth spurt at the same chronological age: "This is fine if you're a guy. If you're a girl, it's a disaster" (2015, p. 134). In parallel with aetonormative ideas of height, this gendered height difference implies women's need of protection or guidance and men's ability to provide it. As Miranda is taller than most of her romantic interests, it seems absurd for men to try to protect or dominate her, which allows Miranda to look for other traits in her partners. While invested in the idea of having a romantic relationship and getting married, she has no inclinations or aptitude for conventional wifely tasks such as cooking or child-minding (S3E3). Narrating the episodes herself and frequently directely engaging with viewers in asides, Miranda is in charge of her own story. In this way, Miranda queers her age category, refusing to be limited by her height, chronological age, and gender; a notion that becomes particularly evident through her playfulness, which I discuss in Chapter Three. Her awkwardly looming position indicates that height and age are not strictly correlated and the unavailability of some aspects of upwards growth encourage her to grow sideways.

Whereas *Miranda* focuses on a tall adult, other narratives challenge the traditional signifying chain around height through representations of tall children. In Sally Gardner's dystopian young adult novel *Maggot Moon* (2012), the child protagonist Standish realises that the systemic authority bestowed on adults in schools, for example, is not supported by height differences in his case and, thus, can be overthrown: having "a revelation of sorts" about height differences, Standish contests being abused by his teacher: "You can't keep hitting me, [. . .] I'm taller than you. Pick on someone your own size." (p. 75). While Standish can only dispute the established system to an extent, Gardner's novel nevertheless suggests that children who exceed adults in height can transfer this physical imbalance

onto their power imbalance by challenging those adults' authority. Dave Cousins's young adult novel *15 Days Without a Head* (2012) locates a similar shift of child-adult power relationships in his unexpectedly tall child protagonist, fifteen-year-old Laurence. His height is the feature most strangers immediately notice and are frightened by: "If Jay's the kid people smile at in the street, I'm the one they cross the road to avoid. I'm over six feet for a start and there's something about my face that makes people uneasy" (p. 20). Laurence is so tall that his friend Mina draws him as a "pair of giant legs and a T-Shirt" without a head because she runs out of paper (p. 173), and nicknames him "Big Man", especially when she wants to reassure him, as in "Don't worry, Big Man, it's gonna work" (p. 234), suggesting that his height should come with confidence. Laurence repeatedly attempts to pass for adult, with varying success. Despite his height, Laurence is unable to pass as an adult when it matters most – failing to collect his radio competition prize (pp. 198-201, 261-262) or money from his building society account (pp. 146-154) – and, moreover, he only seeks to pass to assuade his alcoholic mother back into her parental role through a luxury holiday (the prize), and to ensure his and his brother's survial (to collect money for groceries) when their mother has run away. Therefore, Laurence, while he surpasses and tricks some adults, merely aims to perform his mother's parental role in her absence rather than negotiate his own growth and never achieves the potential for sideways growth that is presented to him through his height. My focal text *Cosmic* (2008) takes such ruptures in child-adult power relationships further through its representation of a child protagonist who, like Bernardo, is unusually tall and who, like Standish, challenges adult authority. However, Boyce employs this premise to expose height as an arbitrary signifier *and* to explore possibilities of active engagement with it: his protagonist Liam specifically, and more successfully than Laurence, uses his height to pass for adult, growing sideways in order to access privileges and through re-assessing adulthood and childhood as age categories.

For Liam, height and chronological age do not correlate. Illustrating that people grow differently and that different types of growth need not correspond, twelve-year-old Liam is "still a child" inside (2008/2009, p. 19) but "unusually tall" (p. 15). When his mother, concerned about his height, seeks medical advice, bone specialists declare Liam to be "normal", for "[b]oys grow at different speeds. Particularly at this point in their lives" (p. 19). While the doctors normalise Liam's height, when Liam grows another seven inches, his father considers this development "a mutation" rather than a growth spurt (p. 20), and, thus, Liam is again placed beyond 'normal' growth. His height renders Liam awkward within his own age category and, alone, is not sufficient for him to belong in the age category of adult. Liam substantiates his peculiar position by comparing himself to Pluto:

> Everyone knows that Pluto's not a planet any more. It's something a bit too big for an asteroid, but too small for a planet. It's nothing. Like someone who's too big to be a kid and too young to be an adult. (p. 65)

Like the aetonormative appearance bias around height, Pluto is a case in point for arbitrary classifications. Pluto was considered to be a planet at its discovery in 1930, but, when similar celestial bodies were found, the International Astronomical Union proposed a new definition of planethood and, in 2006, declared Pluto to be a dwarf planet instead of a 'true' planet (Rincon, 13 Jul 2015, n.pag.). This decision remains contentious, for it is seen as inventing a new category merely to avoid cluttering an existing one, maintaining its managable number of referents and its existing borders (Wall, 11 May 2018, n.pag.). Changing ideas and evidence of borderline cases can provide new perspectives on established notions and lead to new definitions. As neither age category easily applies to Liam, he feels queer not only within his age category but also in the sense of altogether alien. However, he does not resign himself to being "nothing". Instead, Liam uses his

height as a chance to become something else, exploring growing sideways as an alternative to upwards growth that does not require him to neatly fit age categories.

First passing as an adult accidentally, for example as a teacher (Boyce, 2008/2009, ch. 4) and a father (ch. 5), Liam then passes on purpose. When his father refuses to partake (p. 51), Liam deliberately projects an adult appearance to participate in a competition for "the Greatest Dad Ever", in which father-and-child pairs win a trip to a newly built theme park. As this competition eventually leads to Liam being the sole 'adult' in charge of the other participating children in a rocket in outer space, his decision to pass actively has considerable consequences. In the process, Liam realises that, while his height is instrumental in 'conjuring a spectre' of adulthood, age-based passing involves particular "performances" for, as Lingel argues, "successful identifications" (2009, p. 400). For Liam, such performances include inventing an eleven-year-old daughter, lowering his voice, using adult register, and following his father's copy of *Talk to Your Teen* as an "instruction manual" (Boyce, 2008/2009, p. 93) to adult, parental behaviour. Thus, Liam's body provides him with an opportunity to pass, but the way he uses it, the performances of his aspired identity, is crucial to the success of the venture. He needs both his height and his performance to keep up (adult) appearances. However, Liam continues to pass even when he accidentally or deliberately interrupts his performances, for example by explicitly telling the competition's organiser: "I know you think I'm a responsible adult but I'm not. I'm just a boy. An unusually tall and hairy boy, but a boy." (p. 214). Invested in his appearance, and his performance so far, the organiser instead believes Liam to "feel like a child inside", like Einstein (p. 214); Liam is unable to convince her that he is referring to chronological age rather than a way of feeling. Liam's inability to expose himself as non-adult implies that adult status, once (and however) acquired, is unlikely to be questioned by other adults. The contuining success of Liam's performance even when he explicitly highlights his inadequacies as an 'adult' suggests that, as Lee observes, the child-adult

binary is "a convenient fiction" upholding aetonormative power structures and obscuring when adults themselves are 'less than' their age category indicates: "[c]hronological age can serve as a cloak of invisibility that conceals adults' shortcomings" (2001, p. 9). Moreover, Liam's predicament indicates that assuming adulthood, with its responsibilities, is not socio-culturally accepted as a temporary decision, a role to easily abandon at will.[14] As conventional adulthood is strongly invested in and grants a dominant hierarchical position, growing sideways may also be less desirable, more difficult, or more costly for adults than children. For Liam, unexpected performances themselves constitute sideways growth because they allow him to transcend age boundaries, yet he also grows sideways as a result of them.

Boyce's novel suggests that performing adulthood can cause actual, if not perhaps upwards, growth. Acting like an adult affects Liam's emotional and intellectual abilities. He begins to feel responsible for his 'daughter' and other children, increasingly putting their well-being before his own. For example, in outer space, Liam decides to continue to pass as adult and uses his "*Calm Dad Voice*" rather than his inner "panicky twelve-year-old voice" to maintain the other children's illusion of safety (pp. 249-250, emphasis in original). Through his performance, Liam also gains perspective on growth. He realises that upwards growth is potentially undesirable, for adults are excluded from children's resources, such as toys and games, and, instead, face bureaucracy: "It's supposed to be MORE fun being a grown-up. [. . .] What's the POINT in forfeiting your childhood if all you get for it is filling in forms?" (pp. 112-113). As Nella Larsen writes in her novel *Passing* (1929) about race-based passing, there are costs to choosing to pass: "you'll just have to endure some things and give up others" (1929/2002, p. 107). Similarly, Lingel notes that passing can create "stigma", feel like "a burden", and entail "a sense of alienation from those in one's own community who cannot or will not pass" (2009, pp.

[14] I explore another perspective on abandoning adulthood in my discussion of *adulting* in Chapter Three.

393-393). Indeed, Liam's friend Florida, who pretends to be his daughter, needs to remind him that, when they are alone, he need not perform adulthood by enforcing adult rules about appropriate times for ice cream, for example: "You're a kid. I'm a kid. We can do what we want. If we want ice cream for supper, we can have ice cream for supper" (Boyce, 2008/2009, p. 101). Liam also self-imposes his separation from other children when they gleefully wee into their spacesuits' waste bags while eating in outer space: "I just stood and tutted a bit. I think that made it even more enjoyable for them." (p. 273). For him, passing is, as Lingel observes of race-based passing, "a solitary endeavor that not only requires immersion in an adopted community, but also abandonment (at least temporarily) of one's native community" (2009, p. 394). Moving in-between communities, Liam's combined insights from his own experience as a child, from socialising as an 'adult' in adult-only contexts, and from behaving like a father, allow him to see potentials and failings in both children and adults. Adults can be ignorant about basic scientific facts (Boyce, 2008/2009, p. 206) and children's ideas can save lives (p. 271); the boundaries between children and adults are unstable. Moreover, in outer space, Liam notices that the other children grow taller because of the lack of gravity and, back on Earth, Liam himself has shrunk half an inch (p. 305). As in Pinfold's picturebook, certain spaces affect height and, thus, physical growth is disassociated from other types of growth and becomes reversible. In short, Boyce's novel depicts physical, emotional, and intellectual growth as relative and idiosyncratic rather than as linear and universal. More specifically, height, because it is an arbitrary signifier, can be used to cross child-adult boundaries in unexpected ways. For Liam, passing is a way of assuming agency. Being in between categories, being Pluto, may not allow Liam to signify easily or be legible within the grand narrative of growth, but does allow him to practise *looking sideways* at childhood and adulthood from an offside position, critically, and to define himself more fluidly, to grow sideways. Feeling queer within his own age category because of his height and within the

age category of adult because of his chronological age, Liam also feels queer within upwards growth. Through passing, he gains first-hand insight into both age categories that alters conventional ideas of them, and enables him to form his own ideas. He grows sideways by understanding normative growth as a fiction and by inhabiting elements of both childhood and adulthood.

It is significant, however, that the only character able to pass for adult in this text is male. Liam repeatedly conflates concepts of adulthood and fatherhood – for example, he focuses on projecting "dadly" (p. 86, p. 273) rather than 'adult', or even 'parently' and underestimates Florida's intelligence because she is interested in shopping and gossip (p. 93). When she shares her newly acquired knowledge about the history of space suit design, his reaction is patronising: "the really amazing thing was that it was Florida who was telling me. Florida Kirby was talking about air pressure and gravity and stuff" (p. 154). Florida's moments of brilliance such as pinpointing a mistake in a life-and-death calculation of landing procedures in outer space (p. 296), while they do exist, are frequently met with surprise from other characters, implying that she is not expected to be knowledgeable or have agency. Liam's attitude suggests either a sense that male perspectives on upwards (and, by extension, sideways) growth are universal, which silences female voices, or that a focus on personal sideways growth can neglect championing that of others.

Alexander McCall Smith's children's book *Teacher Trouble* (1994) provides an interesting point of comparison. Its premise is similar: a tall child is mistaken for a teacher. Jenny, at the chronological age of ten, is "almost as tall as most grown-ups, and a good deal taller than some" (1994/2006, p. 5). Unlike Liam, she is only mistaken for an adult once and never uses her ability to pass for her own benefit. Initially, Jenny considers passing for adult to be "the most embarrassing, terrible thing" (p. 20), and merely begins to teach maths because she feels too weak, physically, to leave (p. 22). When she commits to

teaching lessons, she constantly worries about her teaching abilities and, after her adventure, is relieved she no longer "ha[s] to know the answers to everything" (p. 76). Instead of pursuing personal advantages through passing, like Liam, Jenny uses her peculiar position as a member of staff to challenge the way the school is run (pp. 50-52). Furthermore, after having been found out, Jenny is offered to return as a teacher "'for a day or so'", on account of having improved the school, and decides that "[p]erhaps she would go back now and then, just to make sure that things were still going well" (pp. 78-79). Arguably because of its protagonist's gender, *Teacher Trouble* treats the subject of a child passing for adult differently from *Cosmic*. Jenny only passes on one occasion and only as a teacher, a role she commits to for the benefit of others. Liam passes accidentally and purposefully – and mostly to pursue his own interests. Their motivations evoke stereotypical gender roles of caring versus exploration. However, whereas Jenny's personal sideways growth does not queer age categories and upwards growth to the extent that Liam's does, it is more political in that it transforms a space's hierarchical structure and the lives of other people, with lasting effects. Both texts suggest that children can bring other, useful perspectives to adult roles, but, while Jenny's passing is fraught with self-doubt and ends with relief over relinquishing adult responsibilities she is (not yet) ready for, Liam's passing balances child-adult positions more carefully in ways that allow him to grow sideways and render upwards growth less desirable. That Liam is the only character able to pass for another age category in *Cosmic*, and does so more purposefully and subversively than Jenny in *Teacher Trouble*, implies that upwards growth is more lenient with male characters than female characters.

Between them, if to different extents and with some gender inequality, Pinfold, Hart, and Boyce, in particular, demonstrate that height is a flawed signifier of age, power, and growth. Instead, they use height to offer possibilities of growing sideways. A short child, Small, is not 'less than' an adult and, thus, need not necessarily grow upwards to

become powerful. A tall child, Liam, can use height to pass for adult, manipulating the signifying chain to his own advantage and accessing adult resources, without actually having to grow up. A tall adult, Miranda, is depicted as a valid protagonist taking up the space to tell her own story in her own voice despite not being very grown-up (or feminine). Children and adults alike can defy age- and gender-based expectations related to their heights through their perspective, like Miranda and Small, or, like Liam, take advantage of these expectations by conjuring a spectre to gain access to adult resources. Appearance unfolds its etymological potential: for some, it can be conjured and 'kept up' at will. Even those unable to conjure it need not be defined by their appearance. Perspective and performance are more decisive than the mere 'fact' of one's height. These texts suggest that short and tall are, as Gaston Bachelard states for *small* and *large*, not "true opposites", for, he says, "miniature can accumulate size. It is vast in its way" (1994, p. 215) and, I add, 'tall' is not always all it seems. In upwards growth, height prescribes age-appropriate behaviour and dictates access to power. In sideways growth, as in these texts, height functions to subvert these expectations and pluralise constructions of childhood and adulthood, emphasising connections between them rather than segregating them or privileging one over the other. Growth is not always apparent, nor do different types of growth always align, and the boundaries between childhood and adulthood can be crossed in unexpected ways. While Pinfold's and Boyce's texts counterpoint a long-standing canon of aetonormative representations of height in children's literature, *Miranda* takes this discourse to a television audience that includes children and adults. *Miranda*, especially, indicates that adults can also be adversely affected by age-related appearance bias, which can restrict those who feel in any way queer in the category of adult, in which their chronological age and body firmly place them. Even those unable to pass, such as Small and Miranda, can queer age categories by combining aspects of "multiple communities" and, in the process, queer the grand narrative of growth. As the next section will show,

clothes offer choices of sideways growth to people irrespective of their bodily makings in twenty-first century Britain.

Cross-Dressing

Clothes, like bodies, signify. Roland Barthes uses de Saussure's concept of language as a semiotic system (*langage)* with social institutions *(langue)* and individual acts *(parole)* to develop an elaborate "vestimentary system" of *clothing*, *dress* and *dressing*, respectively (1957/2006, pp. 5, 8-9). He argues that clothes function like language, for "humans communicate via clothes, tell[ing] each other if they are getting married, being buried, going hunting or to the beach, if they are department store staff or intellectuals" (1963/2006, p. 77). Coining the term *symbolic clothing* for items that are worn with the intention to "signif[y] a part of an individual's identity [. . .] beyond merely making a fashion statement or a specific preference in taste or style", Dianne Gereluk notes that clothes further signal social, political, or religious allegiances (2008, p. xi). Barthes and Gereluk's examples suggest that clothes can communicate rites of passage, activities, destinations, occupations, and various allegiances; I argue that they can also communicate age and growth, offering subversive possibilities beyond the limitations of the body. An observation from Jenny Livingston's documentary *Paris Is Burning* (1990) about 1980s drag balls in Harlem, New York, illuminates the subversive potential of clothing that I am interested in. A regular at these events, Dorian Corey notes in the documentary that, "[i]n real life, you can't get a job as an executive unless you have the educational background and the opportunity", whereas performace provides "fulfillment": "[i]n a ballroom, you can be anything you want. You're not really an executive, but you're looking like an executive. [. . .] If I had the opportunity, I could be one, because I can look like one." (1990,

00:14:15). Clothes can express equal ability where there is no opportunity. In other words, they can communicate alternative possibilities even if the wearer is unable or unwilling to pursue them fully.

Growing up, children are expected to grow out of symbolic clothes of childhood and into symbolic clothes of adulthood. They tend literally, that is physically, to grow out of, for instance, onesies and school uniforms, and are expected emotionally and intellectually to grow out of, for instance, light-up shoes, dressing-up costumes, and openly displaying fandom or allegiances to youth subcultures through their clothes. Symbolic clothes widely associated with adulthood include occupational clothes, such as suits or white coats, and evening gowns. As bodily boundaries move from one age category to another, a change of clothes communicates that growth. If clothes communicate growth, they can also become instruments to control it. Hoodies are a particularly iconic twenty-first century British example of how children are policed for transgressing age boundaries through their vestimentary choices. Although adults also wear pullovers with attached fabric hoods, on children, they signify differently as anxieties about young people's behaviour emerge, metonymically, through concerns about their clothes. Worried that a hood encourages antisocial or criminal activity through hiding the wearer's face in a society incredibly invested in surveillance technology as a strategy for preventing and tackling crime, adults repeatedly use Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs), introduced in 1998, to prevent children from wearing hoodies.[15] The first case in 2005 banned a sixteen-year-old from wearing hoodies in public for a five-year period (Barkham, 27 May 2005, n.pag.). Dictating a child's appearance not merely during school hours, through school uniform policies, but also policing it in their spare time, and for an extended period, is an extreme manifestation of adult insecurities which takes the conventional idea of parents dressing their children to a national level and infringes on human rights.

[15] I discuss the heightened significance of surveillance in twenty-first century Britain in Chapter Four, where I also comment on the origin of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders.

Commenting on the first case, Richard Garside of the Crime and Society Foundation described using an ASBO to enforce vestimentary rules as "idiotic" and exemplary of a wider trend: "[l]egal powers are increasingly being used to micro-manage youth behaviour" (qtd. in Barkham, 27 May 2005, n.pag.). That adults impose vestimentary rules through legal measures to control children's behaviour speaks to the strength of the semiotic connection between hoodies and crime, and suggests that anonymity, if claimed by children is seen to threaten aetonormative power structures. The 'wrong' clothing in the 'wrong' space, on the 'wrong' body, can signal diversion from upwards growth and trigger appearance policing.

Clothes may be enforced but also *chosen*. Individual vestimentary choices can challenge socio-cultural expectations and even, collectively, express a structure of feeling. Raymond Williams notes that structures of feeling can emerge through "dress" (1977, p. 131) and reads "a whole attitude in a way of dress" (Williams, & Hoggart, 1960/1993, p. 113). Interpreting Williams's concept of structures of feeling, Highmore argues that

> Fashions, and the feelings and tastes that drive them, are not evenly spread across society. Fashions and fashioning shape what it is to feel young and old; to feel part of a group, part of a social and ethnic class; they articulate modes of identity and forms of dis-identification; and they render gender and sexuality as a form of visibility and as shared sets of sensitivities. (2016, p. 146)

Clothes can affect how belonging to an age category feels, signal this belonging, and, if individuals' vestimentary decisions diverge from the symbolic clothes of their age category, clothes can also queer this belonging, expressing "dis-identification". Aptly, in psychoanalysis, queer theory, and studies of ideology and power structures, *disidentification* denotes in-between positions, failures to identify, and a conscious resistance to monolithic identity categories and hegemonic discourses (see Lykke, 2014, pp. 31-33). One strategy of expressing, either unconsciouly or consciously,

disidentification with one's age category through clothes is wearing symbolic clothes of another age category. For example, in Patrick Ness's young adult novel *More Than This* (2013), an eleven-year-old wears a Cookie Monster pyjama top for which he is considered to be "about five years too old and too big" (2013, p. 56). In Boyce's children's novel *Framed* (2005), an adult displays his allegiance for the children's comics and television series *The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* through their merchandise, such as "Turtles T-shirts, [. . .] and even a full-size strap-on Turtle shell" (2005/2008, p. 9). In both texts, wearing age-inappropriate clothing signifies divergence from upwards growth. In this way, while clothes mark age boundaries by dressing bodies, they can also dress bodies to unsettle age boundaries in ways that can threaten aetonormative power structures and established ideas of age categories and growth.

I propose that such phenomena in twenty-first century Britain can be read as instances of cross-dressing, a term predominantly used for gender-related vestimentary decisions. According to Vern L. and Bonnie Bullough,

> [c]ross dressing is a simple term for a complex set of phenomena. It ranges from simply wearing one or two items of clothing to a full-scale burlesque, from a comic impersonation to a serious attempt to pass as the opposite gender, from an occasional desire to experiment with gender identity to attempting to live most of one's life as a member of the opposite sex. (1993, p. vii)

Their definition of cross-dressing includes a range of vestimentary decisions, motivations, frequencies, and durations. While they understand cross-dressing as "a symbolic excursion" across gender boundaries (V. L. Bullough, & B. Bullough, 1993, p. ix), I explore it as a challenge of age boundaries while still embracing the flexibility of their definition. I argue that age-related cross-dressing can involve occasionally wearing one item of clothing associated with another age category without *intending* to pass for another age category or challenge age boundaries but still unsettle age boundaries, especially if it is

symptomatic of the vestimentary decisions of a wider age group at a certain point in time. Equally, age-related cross-dressing can include committed, consciously dis-identifying acts of dressing in another age category's symbolic clothes, once, occasionally, or continuously. Picking and choosing from clothes that signify childhood and adulthood, cross-dressing can also fashion individual ways of growing, and, unlike the body-swapping and body-changing narratives discussed at the outset, cross-dressing offers ways of extending individuals' experiences without changing their body. In this section, I analyse representations of specific vestimentary decisions that (re-)negotiate rites of passage in Hardinge's young adult novel *Cuckoo Song*, two series of *Doctor Who*, and the *This Is England* cycle, of onesies in the sitcoms *Miranda*, *Crashing*, and *Uncle*, and of dressing up in Smith and Howard's picturebook *The Dressing-Up Dad* and Dockrill's children's novel *Darcy Burdock*. I examine these representations as a range of instances of cross-dressing that challenge, manipulate, or circumvent age boundaries in twenty-first century Britain.

A Matter of Form: Repeating and Refusing Performances

Dress codes exist for certain occasions and spaces, such as funerals and workplaces, and can be unofficial or official. Uniforms link groups of people with social associations and are opaque codes of power (see Flügel, 1930/1971, p. 132; de Lange, 2012, p. 197), they mark group membership and hierarchical status within and outside the group. School uniforms provide an iconic British example of adults enforcing their ideas of how children ought to dress, in a bid to control content (bodies and their activities) through form (clothes). Although the Department for Education's 2013 guidance on school uniforms is non-statutory and, thus, "strongly encourages" but does not prescribe school uniforms (p. 4), most British children between five and sixteen are marked as children by their school uniforms, at least on their way to, during their time in, and on their way out of school on weekdays, even as these uniforms resemble formal adult dress. School uniforms illustrate

that clothes signal "expected collective behaviour" (Barthes, 1957/2006, p. 14), for, while they are in uniform, children are to represent their school and follow its code of conduct (see Gereluk, 2008, p. 7; Diko, 2012, p. 217). Furthermore, school uniform policies are strictly monitored by teachers, as evident in school documentary series like *Educating Essex* (2011). The fact that a primary school's decision to introduce track suit bottoms for its reception class resulted in a heated debate about slipping educational standards (see Ward, 8 Jul. 2013, n.pag.; Jowett, 10 Jul. 2013, n.pag.) suggests that school uniforms signify being a child in education, on track for upwards growth. Because school uniforms are heavily policed and signify strongly, they also offer means of defiance as they are "the easiest rules to break" in Nolutho Diko's experience (2012, p. 210). In fictional representations for children, there is a tradition of representing the enforcement of school uniforms as a tug of war between children and adults. In Louise Rennison's young adult novel *Confessions of Georgia Nicolson: Angus, Thongs and Full-Frontal Snogging* (1999), students run campaigns protesting their school uniform, seeing it as a mark of their school being "a facist regime" (1999/2000, p. 49). For example, they devise "a way of wearing [the beret] like a pancake" so "you can't see it from the front" (p. 37). Their refusal to conform to school uniform dress codes is presented as a military operation: they send "a deputation" to the headmistress, and call their campaigns "a constant battle" (p. 37). The headmistress insists that "berets are to be worn to and from school", for they are part of "keep[ing] standards up" and "enhanc[ing] the image of the school in the community" (p. 38). In David Walliams's children's novel *The Boy in the Dress* (2008), "[n]ot wearing the correct school uniform is a very serious offence" (p. 215): Lisa regularly gets detention for altering her school uniform out of her interest in fashion and the child protagonist Dennis is expelled for gender-related cross-dressing when he wears a dress to school. Like the representations of tall children in *Maggot Moon* and *15 Days without a Head*, such

representations of refusals to exactly repeat performances around school uniforms rupture child-adult power relationships to an extent.

Hardinge's young adult novel *Cuckoo Song* (2014) employs these symbolic clothes of childhood differently, to interfere with upwards growth; here, the school uniform represents a period of intellectual, emotional and physical upwards growth that is being denied to the protagonist. In *Cuckoo Song*, the protagonist's parents, grieving the loss of their son, seek to freeze time by taking their daughter Triss out of her school uniform and her school (2014, pp. 34-35) and, thereby, out of upwards growth. They treat her as a perennial six-year-old by, for example, buying her dresses as rewards for illnesses (p. 54); in fact, they "teac[h] her to be ill" (p. 325). To borrow Michel Foucault's term, Triss is rendered a *docile body* "that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved" (Foucault, 1975/1991, p. 136). Foucault proposes the term to analyse how schools, armies, hospitals, workshops, and other institutions render people useful and obedient through "individual and collective coercion of bodies" in seventeenth and eighteenth century France. He argues that, through discipline, these institutions manipulate bodies, "produc[ing] subjected and practiced bodies, 'docile' bodies" that become both more apt at their tasks and more easily dominated (1975/1991, p. 138). Triss is extracted from one part-time disciplinary institution (school) and placed full-time in another (her parents' house). Instead of being taught to grow intellectually and physically, for example through P.E. lessons, her body is taught to be weak; all types of growth are discouraged in the interest of preserving her six-year-old self. While Triss is unable to halt her physical growth, she stoops, assuming a docile posture of physical weakness and ill health that renders her appearance shorter and younger (Hardinge, 2014, p. 403). She outgrows her school uniform, "a small cream-coloured blazer, with a straw boater" (p. 34), without mastering the milestones of upwards growth associated with it and, consequently, the uniform "no longer fitt[ing] fill[s] Triss with a saddened yearning" (p. 35). If Triss is

growing sideways, it is not her choice but a result of being excluded from the grand narrative of growth. In *Cuckoo Song*, being denied school uniforms is symptomatic of other forms of denial of rites of passage.

Unwritten and written dress codes are also subverted in idiosyncratic ways that more optimistically signal growing sideways. The BBC television series *Doctor Who*, broadcast, with some gaps, since 1963, is considered to be "a national institution" (D. Butler, 2007, p. 19) and follows an alien, the Doctor, who takes human companions on adventures travelling time and space. Time travel complicates growth for the Doctor and for his companions, as their experiences and changes happen in a pocket of time inaccessible to others – they can be utterly changed emotionally, intellectually, and physically on a trip but return before others have even noticed their departure. Moreover, the Doctor grows unconventionally by regnerating into a new body instead of dying. During the eleventh Doctor's run (2010–2013) specifically, unconventional growth is an overarching theme that emerges through numerous tropes. Clothing is a particularly interesting signifier to trace as, for example, the Doctor's companion Amy Pond's clothes communicate her emotional sideways growth. The eleventh Doctor first meets her as a seven-year-old in a long white-and-red nightgown, a red cardigan, and red wellington boots who wants to join him on his adventures (S5E1). By declaring that her name, Amelia, is "like a name in a fairy tale" (08:19), the Doctor, without referencing a particular tale, frames his new companion as a fairytale character. Accidentally leaving her for twelve years rather than the five minutes he promises her, the Doctor returns to an adult Amelia, now known as Amy. Her adult body is dressed in a police uniform, which the Doctor, despite her short skirt, reads in terms of symbolic clothes of conventional adult occupations. However, Amy works in a less conventionally respectable job, as a kiss-o-gram, and the uniform is a costume. While the uniform signals that Amy has achieved the rite of passage of employment, it accompanies a form of employment that is potentially

short-term, flexible, and unstable, and uneasily pairs dressing-up, an activity conventionally associated with childhood play, with kissing strangers for money. As the Doctor also initially fails to recognise her, Amy has not grown up into the adult he would have expected from knowing her childhood self. When, another two years later, Amy refuses to join him on his adventures, because she "grew up", the Doctor decides to reverse Amy's growth: "Don't worry. I'll soon fix that" (S5E1, 57:54). Subsequently, the Doctor focuses on reversing Amy's emotional rather than her physical growth and, in then headwriter Moffat's words, aims to "pu[t] her back, in a way, to the heart and the spirit and the soul of the girl he first met that he has so damaged by just being a little tad late" (ConS5E13, 11:37). Signalling this change, in the episode "Flesh and Stone", a pullover codes Amy as a child (S5E5, 00:28:06): it is red, Amelia's dominant vestimentary colour, and, since she is about to enter a forest, its flowing material and bat-sleeved cut evoke the fairytale child character Little Red Riding Hood's cape. This fairytale reference evokes Amy's 'fairytale' childhood name, and, by extension, her childhood curiosity and desire for adventure. As Little Red Riding Hood's cape has been read to signify nonconformity (Lake, 1999, n.pag.) and a lack of protection (Zipes, 1983–1984, p. 80, fn. 5), and as Little Red Riding Hood faces danger by straying from the adult-approved path in her tale, the pullover suggests that Amy is diverging from conventional adulthood and that this divergence will increase her vulnerability. Cross-dressing as a fairy tale child character coincides with emotional changes in adult Amy. Possessed by an alien that forces her to count down until she turns into a statue, Amy misspeaks: "Doctor, I'm five. I mean, five. Fine! I'm fine" (S5E5, 09:27). Reading this countdown in terms of her emotional age, Amy, albeit still in her adult body, has become younger – the chronological age of five would, emotionally, place her before her first meeting with the Doctor and allow her to start anew, fully believing in, and dependent on, the Doctor. Hence, the pullover signifies an in betweenness, diverging from conventional timelines and growing sideways

emotionally. Such negotiations of growth are symptomatic of the entire run of the eleventh Doctor, determine the protagonists' character arcs, and are also reflected in the series' unprecedented engagement with children's literature, for example by using Peter Pan as a leitmotif (see Malewski, 2012). Thus, "a national institution" is concerned with imagining alternatives to upwards growth that include cross-dressing into a vestimentary colour of childhood in a way that explores the "every-day time travelling" of temporal vertigo (Segal, 2013/2014, p. 4) emotionally, providing Amy with sideways access to the curiosity of her childhood and to the adventures she misses in upwards growth. However, Amy's clothes are not presented as an explicitly conscious choice, and her sideways growth is initally steered by the Doctor just as Triss's is caused by her parents.

Clothes are represented more explicitly as choices the protagonists themselves can make for or against versions of growth in Meadows's *This Is England* cycle. Woody and Gadget both try on clothes symbolic of specific versions of adulthood but, eventually, discard these clothes as they refuse to perform these versions of adulthood. Woody's vestimentary engagement with growth is shaped by his parents. When he fails to marry Lol, Woody explains his hesitation through his father's change of clothes:

> They used to call him the fucking Ripper, mate, he were a wild man. They stuck a ring on his finger and he ended up wearing a bloody suit and tie all week, and a jumper at weekends. That's why we became skinheads, innit? I don't want to be like that. (S1E1, 30:24)

While Woody associates marriage with growing up to become his father and permanently wearing symbolic clothes of adulthood, Lol argues that one can be "a skinhead at heart" (31:15), that clothes alone cannot move a reluctant body across age boundaries, and that rites of passage can be mastered without losing one's younger self. As Woody becomes estranged from Lol and the gang, he focuses on work and takes to wearing a cardigan (S1E3), and occasionally a tie, with his shirt. This vestimentary decision mirrors the

apperance of both his boss at work and his father (S2E1, 14:45; S2E2, 03:31-04:33). Woody post-Lol girlfriend Jennifer dresses in knitted woollen cardigans in pastel colours, like his mother (S2E2, 03:31). Crediting Jennifer with rescuing Woody from depression and being suicidal, his parents wholeheartedly approve of her: "We've never really loved [your girlfriends] until now" (S2E1, 37:05). Woody dresses like a responsible, employed adult, and even dresses for Christmas with his family (S2E3, 30:23), but he is cross-dressing into his family's accepted version of adulthood, including a stable job and romantic relationship, and is unhappy in this role. For him, cardigans, ties, and a Christmas vest accompany monotone factory work, awkward family jokes, and not doing anything unexpected. He keeps a physical distance, often sitting apart from his parents and Jennifer, and sneaks out at night to watch his gang through a window (S2E1, 44:36). Upon reuniting with Lol, Woody becomes a stay-at-home father and finds clothes that suits him more: his ragged grey shirt, jersey, and jogging trousers (S3E1, 05:46) double as his indoor and outdoor, daytime, and nighttime wear. When his parents, whose wooly outfits he now describes as "matching weird psychopath gear" (S3E1, 21:30), insist Woody works for his former boss again, he replies that himself and Lol "might look like shit but [they are] fucking happy" (S3E1, 22:24) and, later, indicates that there is "absolutely no fucking way" (S3E1, 25:40) he will follow office dress codes again. Twice removed from Woody's nightmarish vision of married life, his weekend jumper is also a weekday jumper and nowhere near as neat and restrictive as his father's clothes.

While Woody re-defines growing up in order to grow sideways, Gadget tries and, then refuses, rites of passage around romantic relationships. At the chronological age of seventeen, he is seduced by middle-aged Trudy and participates in a makeover that affects his growth (S1E2; S1E3). Trudy isolates Gadget from the gang and calls him "Blake" after a character from the television show *Dynasty* (S1E2, 22:00), and Clark Gable (S1E3, 05:44), neither of whom he is familiar with. Trudy consolidates these changes by altering

Gadget's appearance: she suggests a moustache and replaces his usual colourful style of headbands and bright clothes with a beige cableknit jumper, which, at first, he wears reluctantly because it is itchy (see S1E3, 06:42). The beige jumper is directly encoded in terms of growth: Trudy insists that it makes him look like "a big, strong, employable man" (S1E3, 06:38). Tellingly, the jumper tears after a day out with his friends, which includes having a fight with a rival gang where, in this fast-paced and sweaty past-time, the jumper is an obstacle (S1E3). After the fight, Gadget and his friend Harvey smoke in a backgarden, amongst clothes on washing lines and, metaphorically, wash Gadget's new/dirty laundry. Whereas Gadget is convinced that he is "growing up fast" by following Trudy's suggestions, Harvey tugs at the jumper and asks "what the fuck is all this" (24:15), calls the moustache "that fucking horrible shit there" (24:05) and argues that Gadget is "growing sideways" and "into a twat" rather than up:

HARVEY: It's not Gadget though, is it. You've been with Trudy for eight days and you've turned into a fucking idiot.

GADGET: I'm growing up fast, mate, it's what people do.

HARVEY: No, you ain't, you're growing into a twat. You ain't growing up, you're growing sideways. [. . .] You're nothing compared to what you used to be, mate. Gadg was that lad that had a laugh, went out with his mates.

[. . .]

GADGET: She's just –

HARVEY: – a bit fucking mental, and you're becoming mental and old. [. . .] boss, sort yourself out. (S1E3, 24:11)

Unlike Woody's experience, this manifestation of growing sideways is negative, even unhealthy or pathological ("mental"), because Trudy changes everything about Gadget: his appearance, his social life, and his name. His body – its appearance, whereabouts, and

activities – is Trudy's playground rather than his own. Gadget performs adulthood but only passes for a particular version of an adult in a very specific context, and both are determined by Trudy. Gadget's attempt at cross-dressing into Trudy's version of adulthood is ill-advised and unsuccessful. In fact, according to Harvey, Gadget has become "nothing", in the way Liam in *Cosmic* feared he would. Nevertheless, Harvey also alerts Gadget to his agency: he is his own "boss" and can "sort [him]self out". When Gadget breaks up with Trudy, he reverts to his former colourful self, including choosing a jumper of his own (see S3E1, 01:49; S3E2 26:47), showing that 'growth' need not be upwards, permanent, or linear.

Triss, Amy, Woody, and Gadget's clothes challenge age boundaries and express sideways growth. Triss is denied upwards growth by being denied school uniforms and, growing sideways involuntarily, wears the clothes her parents deem appropriate rather than picking her own. Amy's red jumper accompanies her return to a mindset from her childhood which enriches her life as an adult. Woody and Gadget's more conscious age-related cross-dressing approximates an aspect of gender-related cross-dressing Bulldough and Bulldough describe as enabling individuals to "experience vicariously how the other gender lives" (1993, p. x). By wearing adult-approved jumpers Woody and Gadget experience the backstage area of conventional adulthood "vicariously" because, being symbolic, these clothes carry emotional baggage. Both eventually refuse to cross-dress into that adulthood. Triss, Amy, Woody, and Gadget's vestimentary choices, or lack of choices, demonstrate that clothes can stifle, enforce, and enable both upwards and sideways growth. This tension between stifling and enabling clothes is also reflected in a discourse around a specific item of clothing symbolic of childhood: onesies.

Casual Empowerment: From Wearing Onesies to Dressing Up

Like hoodies, onesies are a type of casual, rather than formal, clothing that is linked to particular anxieties around age boundaries; however, onesies were specifically created for a particular age category, children, and, in a distinctly twenty-first century (although not exclusively British) phenomenon, have become commercially available in adult sizes and are worn by adults. The extent of this phenomenon is illustrated by the example sentences in the Oxford English Dictionary definition of *onesie* as a "loose-fitting one-piece leisure garment covering the torso and legs" that exclusively refer to adults (see "Onesie", n.d., n.pag.). Indicating a wider adult demand for cross-dressing, adult-size onesies are available in various price ranges and designs in Britain, for example from Primark, Tesco, George by Asda, All-in-One Company (founded 2008), the Norwegian OnePiece company (founded in 2007), and Kigu, who have been selling animal-shaped onesies in Britain since 2009 ("What Is a Kigu?", n.d., n.pag.). The Kigu crew and other sources locate the trend's peak around 2012 (personal communication, 25 Jan. 2016; Experian Marketing Services, 2013, p. 9; Kay, 27 Dec. 2012, n.pag.). However, adults wearing onesies, like children wearing hoodies, cause adults anxieties, perhaps because onesies, especially if they resemble animals, occupy a peculiar, awkward position between casual clothing and dressing up. While Jess Cartner-Morley suspects that the popularity of onesies is related to the blurring boundaries between public and private in the social media age (28 Dec. 2012, n.pag.), most commentators seem to find onesies threatening because they are too evocative of childhood. In an article called "Is It Ever OK to Wear a Onesie?", *The Guardian*'s fashion advice columnist Hadley Freeman claims that "[t]he real problem with the onesie is [. . .] that it makes one look like a child" (16 Jan. 2012, n.pag.). Peter Thompson, senior lecturer in psychology at the University of York, states: "I can't imagine why any adult would want to do this. Will they be going out wearing nappies next?" (qtd. in Kay, 27 Dec. 2012, n.pag.). Furthermore, nominating onesies as one of the "Worst Ideas

of 2012", Cartner-Morley also considers them to be "giant babygrows" (28 Dec. 2012, n.pag.). Her spelling is common, and emphasises the origin of the term Babygro ("Babygro", n.d. b, n.pag.),[16] but telling, implying that adults, by wearing Babygros, may grow into babies, becoming lazy, irresponsible, and dependent; wearing onesies implies a threat to adulthood. Australian Lachlan Harris's opinion piece for *The Guardian* suggests that wearing onesies is a generational flaw: contemporary young adults, "this live-at-home-forever, get-a-blog-but-not-a-real-job generation", are "the champion of the onesie" because, for Lachlan, they dodge adult responsibilities "like working, paying rent, buying food, and wearing real clothes – clothes with a waistline that weren't invented for small incontinent humans in nappies" (11 Jul. 2013, n.pag.). Critics generally equate wearing onesies with immaturity, regression, and slipping standards, suggesting that by wearing clothes symbolic of becomings (children), adults undermine their privileged status as beings. This commentary is part of a wider moral panic about 'age-inappropriate' clothing that no longer focuses merely on children (see Rachel Williams, 16 Apr. 2010, n.pag.) but also, increasingly, on adults, worrying about their infantilisation. That said, even if made for adults, onesies tend to embrace rather than downplay the garment's conventional symbolic age category, childhood. Adult-size onesies are essentially the same shape as Babygros and are often marketed as jumpsuits and playsuits, terms that evoke practicality, movement, and play. More specifically, onesies are marketed as "warmth, fun and happiness" ("The All-in-One Company", n.d., n.pag.), "the pinnacle of slackerwear" developed by and for "the slackers, the standouts and the fashion misfits" in a "crusade against rules, norms and anything not perfectly comfortable" ("OnePiece Story & Legacy", n.d., n.pag.), and as "the finest, fanciest and funnest animally things", which, "hang[ing] loosely on the body, [. . .] are incredibly comfortable and don't restrict movement" ("What

[16] Although the term *babygrow* is commonly used to describe one-piece garments for babies, *Cambridge Dictionary* and *Oxford Dictionaries* only list the trademarked term Babygro ("Babygro", n.d. a, n.pag.; "Babygro", n.d. b, n.pag.).

Is a Kigu?", n.d., n.pag.). This somewhat contradictory connection between rebellion and comfort implies either that onesies render rebellions comfortable or that being comfortable can be a rebellious act. As onesies are intricately linked to childhood, adults wearing onesies are cross-dressing, whether or not they intend to challenge age boundaries.

Onesies are such a pervasive phenomenon that they have inspired rich fictional representations especially in picturebooks and television series. Pinfold's picturebook *Black Dog*, for example, features incidental but telling representations of onesies. Both child and adult characters wear patterned onesies, without any evaluation; thereby, *Black Dog* communicates a shift in aetonormative power structures, allowing both child and adult characters equal vestimentary choice. Hart's sitcom *Miranda* also challenges age boundaries through onesies. After Miranda's break-up with her boyfriend Gary, she receives a giraffe onesie from her friend Stevie as proof that she "[wi]ll be so much more fun to live with than Gary" (SP2, 01:39). Stevie encourages Miranda to wear her onesie indoors, even complimenting her "nice outfit" (15:20), but disapproves of wearing onesies outdoors. When Miranda leaves to return Gary's belongings, Stevie is shocked: "What, in a giraffe onesie? Are you quite mad?" (15:46). Contradicting her earlier compliment, she insults Miranda, claiming that the onesie "makes you look like a mahoosive loon" (16:54). Echoing cultural commentary about onesies conflating private and public aspects of adulthood, Stevie's utterances associate an adult wearing a onesie in public with insanity, indicating a loss of respectability, authority, and adult status.

Miranda, in turn, finds that wearing a giraffe onesie in public enables her to face Gary when returning his belongings: "I am an empowered woman, preparing to weave my way back to happiness" (15:27). For her, the onesie signals not insanity but emotional independence. However, a therapist agrees with Stevie's intepretation: when Miranda's asserts "seriously, I'm fine", he refers to her clothes for evidence of the opposite (19:07). Miranda continues to wear her onesie and only takes it off, out of her own volition, to go

horseriding on the beach, indicating that growing sideways is a process of finding one's own way through challenges, rather than accepting conventional wisdom and ready-made solutions. *Miranda* reflects common anxieties around onesies through the idea that adults can legitimately wear onesies in private, for fun, but not in public, for serious activities. However, *Miranda* juxtaposes this idea with a protagonist who accomplishes a serious task, facing her ex-boyfriend calmly, through wearing a onesie in public. A demonstration of her sideways growth, cross-dressing into childhood helps Miranda enjoy and cope with adulthood. The female adult protagonist Lulu in the Channel 4 sitcom *Crashing* (2016) by Waller-Bridge wears her onesie as confidently as Miranda. Instead of taking offence or defending herself, the adult protagonist Lulu owns her decision to wear a denim onesie even when a friend questions it:

ANTHONY: "Can you explain to me what you're wearing, please?"

LULU: "It's a onesie. It's very chic. [. . .]"

ANTHONY: "I mean, you look like a child."

LULU: "Thank you!" (E4, 2016, 01:46)

For Lulu, her onesie is a fashion statement; for Anthony, it unsettles her adult status. Her adult status is also uncertain because she, like Anthony, lives in a derelict hospital but, unlike Anthony, is neither officially registered as a property guardian nor has a stable job or any plans for her future, career or otherwise. Although Lulu's onesie, unlike Miranda's, is not modelled on an animal and, therefore, less reminiscent of dressing up, Anthony still strongly associates it with childhood. Instead of taking being called a child as an insult and trying to defend herself against Anthony's interpretation of her onesie as a sign of her unsuccessful upwards growth, Lulu cheerfully thanks him for his observation, suggesting that child is not an inferior age category to adult and that slippages between childhood and adulthood are desirable. Like Miranda, Lulu is secure in her sideways growth.

These depictions contrast sharply with that of a male adult protagonist wearing an animal onesie in the BBC sitcom *Uncle* (2014–2017) by Refson and Vandenburgh. *Uncle*'s titular protagonist Andy, as a semi-failed musician, frequently unemployed, and with flings instead of stable romantic relationships, has similarly little success with conventional markers of adulthood. For one entire episode, Andy wears a tiger onesie, which both child and adult characters interpret as confirmation of his not-quite adult status (S2E3). The episode begins with Andy on his bed, ill with the flu, and growling, tiger-esque, instead of talking to his nephew Errol (00:11). Telling Andy he should have gotten "the jab", several characters throughout the episode suggest that being ill is his fault for irresponsibly failing to get vaccinated. Being ill is a period of time-out in which wearing a onesie might be comforting and acceptable because people are less likely to be judged for their appearance when staying in bed or at home. However, Errol criticises him even in that supposedly lenient space when Andy refuses to enter a songwriting competition:

ERROL: "What have you got to lose?"

ANDY: "My dignity."

ERROL: "You're wearing a onesie."

ANDY: "It's a jumpsuit." (S2E3, 02:14)

Wearing symbolic clothes of childhood can reduce adult authority even in the eyes of a child: pronouncing onesies undignified, Errol implies that Andy is taken less seriously and treated less respectfully while wearing it. Represented as an unsuccessful adult throughout the series, Andy already has a limited amount of authority. Complicating this exchange, Errol is represented, in some ways, as more typical of conventional ideas of adulthood than Andy. Affected by Errol's statement, Andy defensively insists on calling his onesie a jumpsuit. Evoking an action and formal clothing, *jumpsuit* suggests more agency and sophistication, but it hardly differs from *onesie* in common usage. Although Andy is more affected by criticism than Miranda and Lulu, he continues to wear his onesie as they move

into a public space. Yet he anticipates, and adapts to, appearance bias to some extent because, in public, he wears the tiger hood down and a hooded sweatshirt on top of his onesie. Short of hiding it, Andy chooses to "tone down" his onesie and wears it less like a dressing-up costume (02:52).

Adults also notice Andy's outfit. His sister Sam asks, disapprovingly, "Is that a onesie?" (10:42). When Andy later accuses Sam of being immature, she uses his outfit against him: "I'm not the one wearing a onesie" (18:48), confirming Errol's suggestion that clothes can diminish adult authority. The most interesting adult reaction, however, comes from a fellow cross-dresser (albeit male-to-female), Val, who comforts Andy about being unable to sing on the recording after losing his voice: "There's more than one way to be a star, Andy. Nice jumpsuit by the way" (20:47). Val is the only one using the terminology that Andy prefers and uses it unironically. Terminology, self-chosen identifiers particularly, matters to people who diverge from conventional ideas of sexual orientation and gender, and, although *jumpsuit* may seem a trivial example, can also be important in the context of age.[17] While *Tall Story* and *Miranda* link depictions of height that queer age categories to gender-based passing, *Uncle* links age-related cross-dressing to gender-related cross-dressing. This suggests that queering upwards growth in terms of one boundary (age) can entail queering it in terms of another (gender) and empower people in more than one way.

Uncle reflects and extends wider cultural criticism of onesie-wearing adults through ridiculing Andy's animal onesie via reactions from across age categories irrespective of spatial context (private or public) but his onesie also provides him with comfort, marks a time-out, and inspires advice and encouragement from a fellow cross-dresser. Bullough and Bullough assert that in addition to enabling "vicarious" experiences, cross-dressing, "even in its most burlesque and comic aspect, allows an individual to express a different

[17] I explore more examples of idiosyncratic terminology around sideways growth at the end of this section and in Chapter Three.

facet of his or her persona" (1993, p. ix). The representation of Andy as not-quite adult throughout the series suggests that the onesie expresses part of his persona rather than vicariously allowing him to experience childhood. Andy's defensiveness implies that he, unlike Miranda and Lulu, is not secure in this persona and in his sideways growth. Yet, the series offers encouragement to Andy, both vestimentarily and for his life choices, through Val who, likewise cross-dressing and on a non-linear life trajectory, is more understanding.

The picturebook *The Dressing-Up Dad* (2017), written by Smith and illustrated by Howard, goes beyond representing onesies as adult cross-dressing: it links onesies to dressing up as a form of growing sideways that children and adults can pursue together. The protagonists, a father and his son, both wear onesies. For example, the father wears an orange dragon onesie while playfighting his son Danny, sporting a knight costume. Their vestimentary choices complement each other and their activity, framing the play situation as a fantastic adventure. In another scene, Danny and his father both wear fluffy bear onesies to build a snowman. Here, onesies are pragmatic, because their fluffy appearance suggests warmth, and also signal that child and adult are equally invested in their play. This mutual investment is underlined when they each wear a dinosaur onesie for a themed party. Danny and his father wear onesies to become someone else (for example, a dragon and dinosaurs), for dressing up. Traditionally associated with children at play, dressing up is frequently represented in picturebooks, such as Mairi Mackinnon and Kate Sheppard's *The Dressing-Up Box* (2010) and Jeanne Willis and Tony Ross's *We're Going to a PARTY!* (2011), as an activity on a special occasion. In Smith and Howard's picturebook, however, instead of being limited to a special occasion, purpose, space, and time, dressing-up is an everyday choice for the protagonists: they "loved dressing up", and pursue it "at home", "when they went out", and "anywhere, at any time" (2017, n.pag.). Their dressing-up extends beyond onesies to include costumes specifically designed for dressing up, such as rockets (both), wizards (both), robots (both), pirates (both), crab (Danny), and octopus

(father). Even their dog dresses up, as a duck, rocket, fairy, fish, whale, and ladybug. Other child characters only wear onesies on special occasions – a theatre production and dressing-up parties – and no other adult characters wear onesies. That both Danny and his father dress up in onesies in a variety of situations renders Smith and Howard's representation of onesies more radical in blurring age boundaries than those of the texts discussed above and reflects a wider trend of dressing up.

In contrast to the conventional notion of it as child's play, dressing up has become an increasingly acceptable activity for adults in twenty-first century Britain. Dressing up is encouraged at events such as school discos for adults (see "Adults-only School Disco", 4 Dec. 2015, n.pag.), university bops (see "What's On", n.d., n.pag.), Secret Cinema (2007–present; "Secret Cinema: About", n.d., n.pag.), and the festival Bestival, which promises "fancy dress en masse" ("About", n.d., n.pag.). Illustrating the intensity of adult interest, school discos are even thought to have caused "school outfitters [to] report a roaring trade in adult-sized uniforms" (Petridis, 5 Jul. 2002, n.pag.).[18] However, adults dressing up as children, particularly as school girls, can also signal sexual play that, for example in Anne Cassidy's *Looking for JJ* (2004), alienates children: "Her mum, the model, smiling and laughing, wearing nothing but a school tie round her neck. [. . .] [The photographer] had been playing make-believe with her mum. The idea of grown-ups playing a child's game made her feel clammy and uncomfortable" (2004/2005, p. 190). That a changing understanding of dressing up is still an emerging structure of feeling is evident in the fact that *The Dressing-Up Dad* also engages with the anxieties around upwards growth that accompany adults wearing onesies.

Initially, Danny embraces dressing up as 'normal'. His smiling and laughing facial expressions and his eye contact with his father indicate that Danny thoroughly enjoys dressing up with him. However, as he grows older, approaching his next birthday party,

[18] I discuss manifestations of dressing up during two participatory play events in Chapter Three.

Danny begins to compare his father with others. His father, like Miranda, Lulu, and Andy, wears onesies in less conventionally acceptable circumstances, when he is not dressing up with Danny. For example, he wears a lion onesie as a member of the audience, to watch his son perform a lion in a play, to other adults' bemusement, and wears a cow onesie at breakfast. Upon realising that no other father wears a onesie to see his child in the play, Danny "wondered what it would be like to have an ordinary everyday dad" (Smith, 2017, n.pag,). Recognising that his father is different, Danny notices that his 'normal' differs from mainstream ideas. Dressing up questions the father's performance of adulthood: by dressing up, he fails to perform adulthood as other fathers perform it. For his birthday, Danny does not reject the concept of having a bug-themed dressing-up party altogether, but asks that his father to "come as a dad instead [. . .] [a]n ordinary everyday one", essentially asking him to perform conventional adulthood. Underlining the idea that children have some powers in the present, in this case emotional power, over adults, his father obliges, although he is "not sure I have the right outfit". Danny finds a shirt and trousers and, thus, his father, despite already an adult legally, cross-dresses into adulthood. In line with his new outfit, he takes on parental roles at the party, for example distributing cake, instead of joining the children's play. However, neither the father nor the child guests enjoy this situation: "something wasn't right". Consequently, Danny heeds his friends' wish and allows his father to dress up as a caterpillar to chase them. Danny consciously accepts and embraces his father's normal: "You love dressing up, don't you, Dad? [. . .] from now on, [. . .] we can dress up together whenever you like." Danny validates his father's interest in dressing up and values it especially: "Ordinary everyday dads were fine [. . .] but Danny knew his dressing-up dad was the best dad in the world!". Dressing up signals growing sideways here because it is not merely an activity a father pursues together with his child but integral to his own identity. Valuing enrichment over progress, he combines childhood and adulthood through appearances, activities, and attitudes: cross-dressing into childhood

is accompanied by play behaviours and playfulness, yet he still takes (adult) responsibility for his son as a father. Cross-dressing allows him to inhabit other elements of childhood alongside appearance, and directly expresses and facilitates his sideways growth.

Similarly validating depictions of dressing up feature in McCaughrean's children's novel *Peter Pan in Scarlet* (2006) and Dockrill's children's novel *Darcy Burdock* (2013). In *Peter Pan in Scarlet*, dressing up affects adult protagonists utterly. Wendy and the Lost Boys, who left Neverland as children in Barrie's ouevre, are now adults and, noticing that Neverland is leaking into their dreams and worrying about Peter, they want to return there. Mrs Wendy and the now "Old Boys" are unable to return as adults, for they "have all grown too big" and "[n]o one but a child can fly to Neverland" (McCaughrean, 2006, p. 9). A fairy reveals that "the secret of growing young again" (p. 22) is dressing up in symbolic clothes of childhood and the narrator confirms this information: "Everyone knows that when you put on dressing-up clothes, you become someone else. So it follows that if you put on the clothes of your own children, you become their age again." (p. 23). Putting on their children's clothes, among them a rugby uniform, a sailor suit, a school uniform, a sundress and ballet shoes, the adults physically, intellectually, and emotionally become children. For example, Dr Curly feels "good sense trickle out of his head like sand, to be replaced with squibs and sparklers", the Twins "suddenly remembe[r] each other's favourite stories", and Judge Tootles's eyesight improves and his moustache and toothache disappear (p. 24). Clothes really do, as Anne Hollander observes, "unmake the man" (1993, p. 444) or, rather, adult; dressing up has tangible consequences for growth.

Darcy Burdock, like *The Dressing-Up Dad*, is more interested in everyday experiences and sustainable sideways growth than *Peter Pan in Scarlet*. Ten-year-old narrator Darcy Burdock introduces herself as passionate about dressing up and depicts dressing up as a skill she excels at: "I like trying on costumes and wigs in fancy-dress shops. I am a master of disguise" (2013, p. 10). For example, she dresses up her younger

brother Hector as an orphan in "'swaddling clothes' (i.e. a spare duvet cover, a curtain, a tablecloth or, if desperate, a towel)" and cares for him as a "maid from the Victorian times" (p. 17). She even continues when her mother removes her brother from the situation: "When Mum stopped the game because 'it's too dangerous' or 'Hector needs feeding', I would go right into her room and dress up in one of her *smasual* (smart + casual = smasual) dresses and attend the Oscars." (p. 19). Darcy seamlessly moves from one dressing-up situation to another, and her make-believe gains gravitas from her description: instead of *pretending to attend* the Oscars, she *attends* the Oscars. Improvising around obstacles, such as her mother's interference, is a useful strategy in sideways growth.

The most significant feature of dressing up in *Darcy Burdock*, however, is that it remains a central part of her identity as a 'mermelade', even when Darcy feels that she should be growing out of it. Listing her long, unbrushed hair as evidence, she insists that she is "mythical and magical" and "exactly like a mermaid, except that I'm not girlie enough to be a *full* species of mermaid. I'm a bit normal too, like . . . everyday marmelade, so it makes me a mermalade (mermaid + marmelade = mermalade)" (p. 4, emphasis in original). This identity allows her to transcend traditional gender roles and oscillate between being extraordinary and ordinary. She envisions mermelades as "sit[ting] on sofas on the seashore, with unbrushed hair, reading Japanese Manga and eating Peanut M&Ms" and as willing and able to "immediately splash into the sea and be a hero" if people are in danger (pp. 4-5). Thus, mermelades differ from traditional portrayals of mermaids, such as in Hans Christian Andersen's "The Little Mermaid" (1837) and Ron Clements and John Musker's Disney film adaptation *The Little Mermaid* (1989). Whereas Andersen's and Disney's mermaids are conventionally beautiful, with skin "as soft and tender as a rose petal" (Andersen, 1837/1949, n.pag.) and long neatly wavy hair (*The Little Mermaid*), who are unable to survive on land, mermelades have unbrushed hair and are located by, not in, the sea. While Andersen's mermaid saves a prince from drowning, mermelades are

potentially more egalitarian in their heroism. Both Andersen's and Disney's mermaids choose to give up their voice and tail to live on land, mainly to be with a man they have fallen in love with (although Andersen's mermaid, coveting human life, also seeks to trade her 300-year-life for an immortal human soul through marriage). Already in between human and mermaid, mermelades need not sacrifice parts of their identity and are more concerned with non-romantic pleasures. However, Darcy doubts that she can continue to be a mermelade when she grows up: "although I love it I have to get on with being a normal person too. Plus mermalades was a much more fun game when I was younger. These days, I mostly just get laughed at" (pp. 5-6). Like adults in onesies, her dressing up attracts ridicule because she is expected to have grown out of it already. Her doubts, however, are countered by the surprise party her family and friends organise for her eleventh birthday. Instead of reiterating that growing older chronologically means growing out of dressing up, they specifically throw a mermelade party (pp. 170-171). Her mother transforms the living room into an "underwater" space through "blue and white balloons" and painting a sunset over the sea, while her younger sister Poppy dresses "as a mermaid" with a tail and purple hair dye (p. 171). Moreover, Darcy is presented with her own mermaid tail to dress up in: "it's a mermaid tail [. . .] and I am beaming glorious" (p. 172). Thus, her dressing up is sanctioned by her parents and accepted by her family and friends as part of her identity, confirming that Darcy can grow physically, emotionally, and intellectually without "put[ting] away childish things" (C. S. Lewis, 1966/1994, p. 25) and growing out of it. Validated by child and adult characters around her, Darcy is growing sideways by exploring and enriching her identity through her own idiosyncratic terminology. While *The Dressing-Up Dad* embraces dressing up as part of an adult protagonist growing sideways, *Darcy Burdock* embraces it for a child protagonist.

Whether explicitly or implicitly, the texts explored in this subsection suggest that onesies and dressing up need not signify regression for adults nor stasis for children.

Instead, adult-size onesies signify a combination of elements of childhood and adulthood, and provide fun, agency, and security, and dressing up facilitates enriching attitudes and behaviours. Even children, for whom wearing onesies and dressing up is not strictly age-related cross-dressing because both are closely linked to their age category, can wear onesies and dress up in subversive ways. Perhaps, onesies and dressing-up clothes, as Flügel argues for clothes in general, can be worn as "a sort of home upon our backs" (1930/1971, p. 83), providing "protection against *the general unfriendliness of the world as a whole*; or, expressed more psychologically, *a reassurance against the lack of love*" (p. 77, emphasis in original). Slacking through clothing may be, as dramatically claimed for onesies by OnePiece, a sort of revolution, and, more specifically, a revolution against conventional ideas of growing up. Wearing clothes such as onesies and dressing-up costumes casually allows adults to "vicariously" experience the backstage view of childhood, a secure space to grow (sideways) through experimenting. In turn, children can also experiment in such secure spaces and, while they do not directly challenge upwards growth to the same extent in that moment, negotiate their own idiosyncratic growth, as Darcy Burdock does. For both children and adults onesies and dressing up, as portable homes on their backs, render in-between spaces inhabitable and protect, enable, and empower their wearers, showing, as Dorian Corey suggests in *Paris Is Burning*, that they can claim identities not only when they are given opportunities to, but also on their own terms.

In this section on cross-dressing, I have argued that clothes can communicate age in ways that challenge age boundaries, expressing or even facilitating emotional sideways growth. Anxieties about age-inappropriate clothing, whether targeting children wearing hoodies or adults wearing onesies, indicate that crossing vestimentary boundaries between childhood and adulthood threatens established categories and hierarchies, in this case the categories of child and adult and aetonormative power structures. Notions of power and

authority can be subverted. Cross-dressing can displace age norms but, as Judith Butler writes on gender-related cross-dresing, not all cross-dressing is equally subversive: "for a copy to be subversive of heterosexual hegemony it has to both mime and displace its conventions. And not all mimicry is displacing" (1992, p. 84). Even if not consciously worn to cross-dress, onesies have come to signify people who fail or refuse to conform to upwards growth, whether through failing rites of passage or exhibiting behaviours and attitudes more conventionally associated with another age category. Cross-dressing can help transform one's age category, connect with another age category, or inhabit elements of another age category, opening up possibilities for growing sideways for children and adults. In line with Butler's idea of going beyond mimicry to disrupt gender norms, Flanagan observes that female-to-male cross-dressers in children's fiction "outperform" males by combining female and male skills (2008, pp. 36-38); similarly, Miranda, Liam, and the Dressing-Up Dad in particular demonstrate that success comes not from cross-dressing and passing alone but from combining qualities across age categories.

Cross-dressing, as an expression and strategy of growing sideways, means to pick and choose from symbolic clothes of childhood and adulthood in order to fashion individual growth. The texts examined in this section demonstrate a range of aims in sideways growth: to disrupt the linear, irreversible upwards notion of growth by switching between symbolic clothes of childhood and adulthood on different occasions (Gadget, Woody, Amy), by wearing symbolic clothes of childhood as an adult (Miranda, Lulu, Andy, Dressing-Up Dad) without intention to pass, and by creating individualised symbolic clothes (Darcy). Age-based cross-dressing unsettles the child-adult binary by allowing individuals to experience aspects of each other's age category either "vicariously" or as aspects of their own identities, underlining that age categories are constructed, vague, and uninhabitable. Thus, age-related cross-dressing can, as Flanagan writes about gender-related cross-dressing, **"**expose socially constructed boundaries [. . .] without bias" for

either category involved (2008, p. 257). As it contains varied possibilities and is less tied to bodily prerequisites, cross-dressing challenges age boundaries in a way that can be part of everyday age performances rather than be resigned to special occasions or 'lazy' adults.

Conclusion: Embracing the Excluded Middle

This chapter's discussion demonstrates that a wide range of twenty-first century British texts challenges the boundaries between childhood and adulthood through appearance. Through their representations and constructions of height and clothes, the examples I have analysed suggest that appearance is a flawed signifier of age, growth, and power. Height can be used to pass for another age category and access its resources, and those who are unable to pass can still queer their age category through their bodies. Clothes can communicate and facilitate sideways growth through cross-dressing, allowing for idiosyncratic rites of passage and identities that combine aspects of childhood and adulthood. Children and adults can also collaborate in their sideways growth through vestimentary decisions, such as dressing up. Both passing and cross-dressing are affected by, even as they challenge, power structures. Disrupting age boundaries through appearance can, especially for females, also disrupt gender boundaries and, across genders and age categories, may require encouragement and validation from others to be sustainable. Moreover, not all instances of these strategies – passing or cross-dressing into adulthood, or even dressing up as a particular adult – indicate committed sideways growth and subvert age boundaries successfully, as Cousin's *15 Days Without a Head* suggests. Whether or not such strategies constitue sideways growth depends on the circumstances, such as the motivation, choice, purpose, and accompanying feeling; for example, Laurence's worries about his and his brother's physical survival contrast severely with

Danny's father's delight in wearing onesies and dressing up. Nevertheless, because appearance and growth are slippery, and age is performative, bodies and clothes can become playgrounds in which to resist notions of upwards growth and challenge aetonormative power structures. Joosen observes that "a considerable number of children's books" juxtaposes adulthood and childhood, "celebrating mainly the latter", and, thereby, "contribute[s] to the anxiety that surrounds adulthood in the contemporary age" (2018, pp. 82-83). My readings of, for example, *Cosmic*, *The Dressing-Up Dad*, and *Darcy Burdock* suggest that some texts note and explore such juxtapositions but ultimately reject rigid age categories for an in-between identity of sideways growth. In the process, being a child and being an adult are exposed as vague concepts.

As discussed in Chapter One, concepts are considered to be vague if they possess borderline cases, which challenge the law of the excluded middle, the notion that a predicate is either true or not true of a particular case. In everyday life in contemporary Western society, the concepts child and adult are often thought of as absolute, true, and inhabitable and the boundaries between them as stable, while borderline cases are ignored, the middle excluded. As, in Elizabeth Wilson's phrase, "unclear boundaries disturb us" (1985/2003, p. 2), the grand narrative of growth constructs the path from childhood to adulthood as straightforward and clearly signposted, especially on the site of appearance. Appearance is often the first step in differentiating between age categories. Questioning and resisting straightforward signifying chains between bodies, clothes, age, and growth, the texts discussed in this chapter indicate that, even on the literally obvious site of appearance, there are borderline cases. Thus, they explore and embrace the excluded middle, asserting that it exists and is a playground for meaning; being Pluto, to borrow Liam's cosmic image for falling in between categories, is not necessarily negative, for being in between can be a sideways alternative of growth in its own right. By demonstrating that it is possible to inhabit the excluded middle through sideways growth

and that individuals can switch between the categories child and adult, by passing, or combine them, through cross-dressing, these examples underline my suggestion from Chapter One that these age categories are "radically uninhabitable" subject positions (J. Butler, 1992, p. 85). Perhaps childhood neither ends nor begins. Possibly, child and adult are not states of being with specific appearances but modes, ways of feeling and behaving, that growing sideways provides more fluid access to. If the child-adult binary is flawed even on the level of embodied, physical appearance, other aspects of the grand narrative of growth can also be challenged. In the following chapter, I build on my analysis of dressing up in this chapter to analyse challenges to conventional expectations of behaviour and attitudes through the conceptual area of play.

Play

Performative (Role) Play | Play(-fulness) as a Queer Way of Life

Analysing notions of play illuminates social and cultural expectations around age-specific, or age-(in)appropriate, behaviours and attitudes. These expectations are reflected in, and imposed by, commonly used phrases such as *to act one's age*, which implies that, depending on age, some behaviours and attitudes are more acceptable than others. I focus on play behaviours and playfulness because, through them, as I will demonstrate, age boundaries are conventionally positioned in the grand narrative of growth, and also widely challenged in twenty-first century Britain. I propose that, as it tends to require emotional involvement and expand the player's range of experiences, play holds significant potential for exploring, and inhabiting, growing sideways as a structure of feeling that prioritises enrichment over progress. British author Ian McEwan's novel for adults *The Child in Time* (1987) exemplifies some conventional expectations around play that, I will argue, are challenged by twenty-first century texts and participatory events, and ties such expectations into a wider social context.

Published in the final years of Margaret Thatcher's tenure as Prime Minister, *The Child in Time* is a "fierce attack on Thatcherism" (Hayes, & Groes, 2009, p. 27), presenting this period as hostile to play. For example, McEwan's Prime Minister commissions *The Authorised Childcare Handbook*, which advocates the grand narrative of growth and its power dynamics. The handbook frames play as a childhood activity that is possible only because of adults' benevolence: childhood, enabling children "to devote much of their time to play", is "a privilege" and "[n]o child as it grows older should be allowed to forget that its parents, as embodiments of society, are the ones who grant this privilege, and do so at their own expense" (McEwan, 1987/1992, p. 99). Childhood, and by

extension play, are short-term privileges entangled in aetonormative power structures, for which individuals accrue debt. Prioritising adulthood over childhood and presenting upwards growth as desirable and healthy, the handbook also compares childhood to a disease, "a physically and mentally incapitating condition, distorting emotions, perceptions and reason, from which growing up is the slow and difficult recovery" (p. 197). Extrapolating from this analogy, play is a symptom of this disease, something harmful or objectionable to be overcome, and, in adults, play signals being physically, mentally, or emotionally unhealthy.

This attitude towards play adversely affects adult protagonist Stephen Lewis's forty-nine-year-old friend Charles Darke. Darke aspires to adulthood *and* childhood, as his wife observes: "He wanted to be famous, and have people tell him that one day he would be Prime Minister, and he wanted to be the little boy without a care in the world" (p. 222). However, he is unable to fully inhabit both simultaneously. Darke either has successful careers, subscribes to the grand narrative of growth by authoring the handbook to the government's specifications, and is firmly categorised as a "grown-u[p]" by Lewis (p. 29), or he replaces conventional adulthood with living like a "ten-year-old" (p. 116) by changing his appearance to pass for a boy (p. 120) and pursuing behaviours commonly associated with childhood play in traditional boys' adventure fiction, such as building a tree house (p. 116) and enthusiastically shooting pebbles with a catapult (p. 123). His playing happens in secret, in a remote forest, away from the disapproval of other adults. Darke's forest "fantasies" initially strike Lewis as "wild and liberating", although he is loathe to join, but ultimately as "silly, something he should snap out of" (p. 132). Darke's wife sees his struggle as symptomatic of wider society:

> [h]e could never bring his qualities as a child – [. . .] funny and direct and gentle – [. . .] into his public life. Instead, it was all frenetic compensation for what he took to be an excess of vulnerability. All this striving and shouting, cornering markets,

> winning arguments to keep his weakness at bay. [. . .] Charles's case was just an extreme form of a general problem. (p. 226)

In a society where childhood and adulthood are strictly segregated and of unequal value, where playing is restricted to childhood, Darke is unable to reconcile his desires and, ostensibly supporting the idea that play in adults is unhealthy, commits suicide. McEwan's portrayal is in line with Rebecca Abram's suggestion that Thatcherism prioritised work over play, as a "new idol, whom no amount of hours could appease", and as a yardstick of merit: "people's worth was measured by the job they did and the money they made. Pity the poor sod who didn't have either; shame on those who could have, but chose not to." (13 Nov. 2000, n.pag.). In response to this culture, Abrams's *The Playful Self* (1997) argues for play as indispensable to well-rounded individuals and societies. McEwan, writing from within Thatcherism, depicts Darke as a solitary player, and play itself as an unsuccessful strategy for adult existence. In contrast, as I will demonstrate, Meadows's *This Is England* cycle, equally set during Thatcherism but created at a socio-cultural moment at which attitudes towards play are changing on a broad scale, finds more sustainable solutions in play that support idiosyncratic ideas of growth. While both texts interrogate the idea of play, their different approaches reflect the fact that the wider social context and cultural attitudes towards childhood and adulthood affect attitudes towards play and also the extent to which play can be envisoned in ways that facilitate sideways growth.

In this chapter, I examine participatory events and fictional representations to argue that the types of play encouraged in children and adults in twenty-first century Britain challenge preconceptions of age-(in)appropriate behaviour, and affect which trajectories of growth are socially and culturally acceptable. I begin with an examination of critical approaches towards play and the increasing focus on play as an adult activity in twenty-first century Britian. I then explore performative (role) play and playfulness as a long-term

attitude. Building on Halberstam's idea of queer time (2005), I explore performative (role) play with age categories through an analysis of Camp Wildfire (2015–present), compare it to the theme park KidZania London (2015–present), and relate both to the wider socio-cultural phenomenon of *adulting*. If play is, as I will argue, borrowing Raymond Williams's term, a signifying practice affecting "ways of feeling" (1961/1992, p. 312), writing about the experiences (feelings) that play opportunities encourage is invaluable. I identify playfulness as a queer way of life in Boyce's children's novel *Framed* (2005), Almond's children's book *My Dad's a Birdman* (2008), Hart's sitcom *Miranda* (2009–2015), Oliver Jeffers's picturebook *The Heart and the Bottle* (2010), Sita Brahmachari's children's novel *Artichoke Hearts* (2011), Rachel Tunnard's film *Adult Life Skills* (2016), and Meadows's *This Is England* cycle. In the process, I also consider Abrams's notion that even possibilities of subversive play are gendered. This primary material allows me to examine how play is pursued and represented across a range of contexts and how it may trouble ideas of growth in everyday life and fiction.

To meaningfully investigate discrete phenomena which, I argue, queer ideas of upwards growth via play in twenty-first century Britain, I understand play through Ludwig Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblances. In *Philosophical Investigations* (1953/1986), Wittgenstein notes that the concept 'game' is difficult to define, for games "have no one thing in common which makes us use the same word for all" – for example, not all of them are amusing or competitive (pp. 31-32). Instead, there are family resemblances, "a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing" much like "the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and criss-cross" (p. 32). Paying attention to criss-crossing and overlapping, rather than straightforward connections, the notion of family resemblances allows for analysing relationships between phenomena that appear to be distinct. As Wittgenstein developed this notion using games, a sub-concept of play, it

seems apt to apply it to the wider concept of play. While make-believe and singing in the street may seem to be distinct types of behaviour, I demonstrate that they share features of play that can facilitate sideways growth.

Critical Approaches to Play

Rebekah Willett and Muriel Robinson argue that concepts of play "are always framed in particular ways" and are "never value-neutral" (2009/2011, p. 6). For example, play is frequently conceived of in terms of growth and serves to delineate age boundaries. Play is thought to increase cognitive and physical abilities, adaptability, and knowledge of the "'home range'",[19] while also being enjoyable, improving relationships, and practising behaviour needed later in life (Bateson & Martin, 2013, pp. 29-31). Therefore, play may further physical, intellectual, and emotional development, or, in Winnicott's words: "[p]laying facilitates growth" (1971/2005, p. 56). This notion is primarily reserved for children's play. Brian Sutton-Smith observes that a "*rhetoric of play as progress*" dominates Western cultures and research and describes it as an "advocacy of the notion that animals and children, but not adults, adapt and develop through their play" (1997/2001, pp. 9-10). Consequently, "play is seen largely as what children do but not what adults do": play is "important for children's growth" but "merely a diversion" and "recreat[ional]" for adults (Sutton-Smith, 1997/2001, p. 7). Developmental psychologist Erikson refines this juxtaposition by arguing that children play "to deal with experience by creating model situations and to master reality by experiment and planning" (1950/1995, p. 199), while play permits working adults a "vacation from [their] social and economic reality" of producing and exchanging commodities (p. 191). Therefore, "the playing adult

[19] I discuss changes in children's home range in millennial Britain in Chapter Four.

steps sideward into another reality; the playing child advances forward into new stages of mastery" (Erikson, 1950/1995, p. 199). Whereas play and playfulness are expected parts of children's everyday lives, to the extent that provisions are made for play at school (playtime), they are less frequent, expected, and acceptable in the everyday lives of adults, which are assumed to revolve around work. This is reflected in the existence of legal (age) boundaries of play: unlike adults, children have a legally secured right to play (Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, art. 31). Thus, in societies that subscribe to a grand narrative whereby growth is upwards and ends with adulthood, play is often associated exclusively with childhood (rather than seen as a universal human pursuit), indicating that children need play to grow up into adults intellectually, emotionally, and physically, and that adults, already grown-up, have no need or excuse for play (beyond occasional recreation). Adults who play extensively or exhibit playfulness weaken their adult status, demonstrating that they have not yet intellectually or emotionally grown out of play. In the grand narrative of upwards growth, growing up into adulthood requires growing out of play as a behaviour and playfulness as an attitude. Whilst Erikson, in developmental terms, understands play to denote sideways movements for adults, leading nowhere, and forwards movements for children, leading to upwards growth, I argue that play can also move children sideways, and that sideways can be somewhere rather than nowhere.

This more optimistic perspective on play is symptomatic of a wider shift in structures of feeling emerging around play in twenty-first century Britain. As "variations in the prevalence and forms that the various types of play take in different societies [. . .] appear to arise from differing attitudes concerning the nature of childhood and the value of play" (Whitebread, Basilio, Kuvalja, & Vermaare, 2012, p. 8), some cultures and eras are more play-oriented than others. As a socio-cultural moment at which attitudes towards play are changing, twenty-first century Britain is particularly invested in children's *and* adults' play. From the early years of the Blair administration until the 2010 general election and

financial crisis, “an almost constant flurry of Government and Assembly activity” around children’s play triggered exceptional funding, such as a one-million pound adventure playground grants programme and a £155 million Big Lottery Fund funding initiative for children’s play, and increased media coverage of play developments (B. Hughes, 2001/2012, pp. xi-xii). This activity is motivated by concerns about an “obesity epidemic in young children” reported as treatable by “promot[ing]” play over television in the *British Medical Journal* (Dietz, 2001, pp. 313-314), a discourse still pertinent in 2018 (see Savage, 25 Aug. 2018, n.pag.), and about safety, as indicated by Labour’s 2001 election promise to “develop safe places for children to play” (Labour Party, 2001, n.pag.). The ensuing interest in taking children’s play seriously is also reflected in lobbying, job opportunities, and research: play organisations such as Play England, Play Wales, Play Scotland and Playboard Northern Ireland promote children’s right to play; playwork, supporting children to create their own play opportunities and spaces, has become a valid career choice; and, in 2011, the University of Greenwich launched its Centre for the Study of Play & Recreation, the first national research centre of its kind.

At the same time, play has been increasingly claimed by (and for) adults. Scottish journalist Pat Kane published several articles (the first in 1997) and a monograph (2004), and runs a consulting agency, around his notion of a play ethic. Kane notices the declining importance of the work ethic – an ideology that elevates work by trivialising, marginalising, and demonising play as “childish” (2004, p. 3) – and recognises instead “a new space of connection between children and adults: a mutual interest in play, its technologies, rituals and materials” (2004, p. 154). He posits the emergence of a play ethic: “Play will be to the 21st century what work was to the Industrial Age – our dominant way of knowing, doing and creating value” (Play Axiom, n.d., n.pag.). The qualities of playing, “improvisation, fantasy, abundance”, are to replace those of working, “routine, self-denial, propriety” (2004, p. 14), in order for people to “create and act, rather than simply consume

and spectate" (2004, p. 63). Writing in the same period, Abrams similarly envisions play "as a mindset as much as an activity" that is "not in the least trivial or childish" and, instead, "a fundamental social good" (13 Nov. 2000, n.pag.). However, she proposes that women need to fight for "the right to play" (13 Nov. 2000, n.pag.), a fight that, she states, has been neglected by feminism, suggesting that even subversive notions of play are gendered. More concretely, an unprecedented number of participatory play opportunities encourage adults to pursue play behaviours associated with children. The Natural History Museum in London offers dinosaur sleepover events for children ("Dino Snores for Kids") and also for adults ("Dino Snores for Grown-Ups") and, thus, invites adults into an activity strongly associated with childhood and play. Similarly, the Pillow Fight Club in London and Southampton advocates pillow fights as an activity for adults in a ticketed and organised context. London's Hulagan Hoop classes teach adults play skills associated with childhood that children do not tend to be formally taught. Starting with Scottish illustrator Johanna Basford's *Secret Garden: An Inky Treasure Hunt and Colouring Book* (2013), colouring books for adults have become an internationally successful commodity, and online guidelines on how to use them also imply a notion of adults as less competent players who need more guidance than children, or a desire by adults to play within a safe context rather than with abandon. Adult play workshops such as Playful Being provide lessons in game play (Taylor, & Penrose, n.d., n.pag.), and play therapy is also offered to adults (Hicks, 23. Mar 2016, n.pag.). These play opportunities make play officially and publicly available to adults on a broad scale, if in slightly different forms or contexts than it is available to children. Media reports on such play opportunities as a trend for adult play, for example in *The Telegraph* (Hicks, 3 Mar. 2016, n.pag.), on BBC Radio Scotland (*Creativity Unmasked*, 2016, n.pag.), and in *Stylist* (Corcoran, 26 Aug. 2015), illustrate that this is a large-scale phenomenon and one that is being noticed. Media coverage dismissing this phenomenon as an "infantilising trend" (Hicks, 3 Mar. 2016, n.pag.) further suggests

that it can unsettle the grand narrative of growth. Changes in the status of play affect notions of growth: if play is ubiquitous and becoming acceptable for adults, then age boundaries and conventional ideas of age categories become available for queering and sideways growth.

This chapter argues that the potential of play to facilitate sideways growth is being recognised, advocated for, and exploited in twenty-first century Britain. To examine play in this context, I frame previous definitions to function alongside my concept of growing sideways. In his influential *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (1944/1980), Dutch cultural critic Johan Huizinga defines play as an immersive activity distinct from other pursuits in process, motivation, temporality, locality, and its effect on (collective) identity formation:

> we might call [play] a free activity standing quite consciously outside 'ordinary' life as being 'not serious', but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings [. . .]. (p. 13)

If play is a unique activity that diverges from ordinary, serious life, and strongly affects individual players but also creates communities, it can allow individuals and groups to grow sideways through exploring behaviours and kinships outside of those prioritised by the grand narrative of growth, and creating their own boundaries and rules. British biologists Patrick Bateson and Paul Martin elaborate on play as exploration in their study *Play, Playfulness, Creativity and Innovation* (2013). They also describe play as an "intrinsically motivated" state antithetical to "'work' or 'serious' behaviour'", and add that, in play, participants are somewhat "protected from [the] normal consequences" of their behaviour, and able to act or think in "novel combinations" that can temporarily

change roles and statuses in relationships (p. 12). As the state of playing potentially protects players' experimentation from punitive consequences, it can be an accessible and low-risk form of growing sideways. Furthermore, I am interested in how such novel combinations achieved through play alter roles and statuses in terms of age, and whether they have implications beyond the respective play situation. Reflecting an increasing twenty-first century interest in playing adults, American psychologists Meredith Van Vleet and Brooke C. Feeney, in their article "Young at Heart: A Perspective for Advancing Research on Play in Adulthood" (2015), propose a standardised definition specifically for adults' play that unapologetically claims affect: "*an activity or behaviour that (a) is carried out with the goal of amusement and fun, (b) involves an enthusiastic and in-the-moment attitude or approach, and (c) is highly interactive*" (p. 640, emphasis in original). In sideways growth, then, players, irrespective of their age, can emotionally invest in, and be affected by, play. Play is also claimed for adults by Huizinga: the main, frequently quoted, argument in his opus on play asserts that "genuine, pure play is one of the main bases of civilisation" (1944/1980, p. 5), and he defines humans as rational makers (*homo sapiens*, *homo faber*) and, equally importantly, as players: *homo ludens* (1944/1980, fwd. n.pag.). Similarly, American author Steven Johnson argues that play is a driving force in history, "often [. . .] transforming society in more dramatic ways than [. . .] utilitarian concerns" (2016/2017, p. 9). Bateson and Martin note that adults "are perfectively capable of" and "sometimes benefit from" playing (2013, p. 5), for example in creating innovative art and research (ch. 5). Van Fleet and Feeney's work is part of a whole research area on adult playfulness in psychology. Playfulness is defined as "a predisposition to define and engage in activities in a nonserious or fanciful manner to increase enjoyment" (Glynn & Webster, 1992, p. 83) and, while playful adults are seen to be "non-serious, non-conscientious, or hedonistically oriented" (Proyer, 2011, p. 466), playfulness can improve adults' achievement at work (Glynn & Webster, 1992), in academia (Proyer, 2011), and in

relationships (Van Fleet & Feeney, 2015). Such observations claim play as a valuable part of life for adults without, however, conceptualising it as a way of living and growing, which I will explore in the second half of this chapter. Although from different times, geographical areas, and disciplines, Huizinga's, Bates and Martin's, and Van Fleet and Feeney's definitions juxtapose play and seriousness, and suggest that play is a special activity in a special context that can, at least temporarily, cause change, for example in rules, roles, statuses, relationships, and moods, and be beneficial for adults. Exploring play in terms of growing sideways, I contend that play can be meaningful for challenging age boundaries beyond the temporary frame of play behaviours, and can manifest as a general, long-term attitude – playfulness – and as a short-term behaviour. Playfulness, whether it instigates play behaviours or leads to applying elements of play to 'serious' behaviours and situations, can be a way of feeling queer in upwards growth. I contribute to previous theorisations of play by arguing, through analysing my primary material, that play can facilitate growth also in adults, and that children and adults can grow sideways together through play.

Performative (Role) Play

Play has unique potential for facilitating sideways growth because it is conducive to exploring alternative possibilities of being and growing. In their research on mammalian play, Marek Spinka, Ruth C. Newberry, and Marc Bekoff propose that play provides "training for the unexpected" that may "result in more diverse behavior" (2001, pp. 143, 163). According to them, play serves "to rehearse behavioral sequences in which animals lose full control over their locomotion, position, or sensory/spatial input and need to regain these faculties quickly" – animals regain these by "learning how to improvise their

behavior by chaining conventional movements with atypical movements" (p. 143). Play, then, increases the "versatility of [animals'] movements", and their "ability [. . .] to cope emotionally with unexpected situations" (Spinka, Newberry, & Bekoff, 2001, p. 143). I suggest that play can generate novel ways of being by expanding my discussion of age performativity from Chapter Two.

Performative role play, a term I use to refer to individuals of one age category performing roles associated with another age category in a play situation, can offer training for "unexpected" growth. By playing *at* inhabiting aspects of another age category, individuals are playing *with* age categories, combining conventional (associated with their own age category) and atypical (associated with another age category) behavioural and attitudinal elements. Thus, performative role play can challenge strict age boundaries, either for the duration of the activity or, if improvisation continues in some form, long-term. Performative role play can provide 'hands-on' training for growing sideways, as participants may aquire more versatile behaviours or movements, become more flexible emotionally, or improvise attitudes and behaviours that transcend (or are novel to all) age categories involved in their play experience. Many participatory play opportunities available in twenty-first century Britain, particularly those targeted exclusively at adults, encourage performative role play, for example adult-only bouncy castles and ballpools. However, not every instance of performative role play necessarily plays with age categories subversively. The specifics and extents to which such role play trains participants in novel ways of being that challenge the grand narrative of growth depend on the particular play cirumstances. In this section, I examine two particular participatory play opportunities: the adult-only annual adventure festival Camp Wildfire and the child-only theme park KidZania London. Both launched in 2015, and they complement each other in useful ways because of differences in their target audiences and, as I will demonstrate, because of the different extents to which their play queers ideas of growth. Each

establishes a specific time and space aside from everyday life, in which participants are explicitly or implicitly encouraged to explore notions of growth.

(Role-)Playing Childhood

Camp Wildfire takes place in a forest in Kent, with some secrecy around the exact location (for first-time participants) and line-up. Unlike Darke's forest in *The Child in Time*, this forest is claimed specifically by and for adults to play collectively. Legal adulthood is an explicit requirement for participation:

> [T]his is an over 18s only event. Children get to go on adventures all the time. Wildfire Adventure Camp is a chance for the adults to dance around in the forest like lunatics and sing at the top of their lungs. ("FAQs", n.d., n.pag.)

This statement from the festival's website implies that adults cannot pursue all types of (play) behaviours in the presence of or together with children. More specifically, it suggests that adults require the absence of children to play in a way that queers notions of growth through a freewheeling use of their bodies in nature in pursuit of fun, and through diverging ("like lunatics") from normative behaviour (socially and culturally considered 'sane'). The festival organisers identify age-inappropriate play behaviours and are providing an alternative context wherein these behaviours become appropriate for adults: three days in "an immersive 1950's camp" (Camp Wildfire, n.d., n.pag.) in a forest, with day-time activities and night-time music, and Scouting as an overall framework, according to which, for example participants are divided into four animal patrols reminiscent of the Scouting Movement's organisational structure (see Baden-Powell, 1908/2003, p. 28). Camp Wildfire intentionally creates a backstage area of adulthood that is conducive to experimenting instead of 'keeping up appearances'. Drawing on my experience of the festival in 2015, 2016, and 2017, I argue that Camp Wildfire, through references to Scouting, encourages adults to pursue play behaviours associated with children.

Specifically, I explore how Camp Wildfire, by nostalgically evoking the cultural trope of Scouting, suggesting its participants dress up in Scout uniforms, and subverting the Scouting Movement's play ethos, invites adults to explore growing sideways.

Camp Wildfire enables participants' immersion in play through evoking the cultural trope of Scouting, which centres on children, nostalgically for adults. By offering an adult-only Scouting experience, Camp Wildfire (re-)creates collective and individual pasts. As the Scouting Movement is a substantial part of the British collective imagination, many British adults participating in Camp Wildfire are intimately familiar with Scouting experiences. For participants who never became Scouts, Camp Wildfire creates a Scouting experience reminiscent of an imaginary, culturally shared childhood experience; for participants who were Scouts as children, Camp Wildfire re-creates, if in a different shape, a childhood experience they had. For some participants, Camp Wildfire, like American Autostraddle's A Camp for its LGBTQIA+ participants ("Camp", n.d., n.pag.), might even *re-do* childhood experiences, transforming them from negative to positive or vice versa. Evoking, and altering, imagined or lived childhood experiences for its participants, Camp Wildfire establishes a context in which behaviours and attitudes associated with children are permissible. As the festival emotionally connects some participants to their pasts, these behaviours and attitudes are potentially more easily accessible than in other contexts. Providing a structure some participants recognise from their lived, imagined, or collectively shared past, Camp Wildfire invites adults to role-play childhood, both in the sense of playing at being in a Scout camp and in the sense of adopting specific behaviours and attitudes. Furthermore, the festival organisers, asking participants to "g[o] analogue" by avoiding mobile phones and digital cameras ("Analogue Antics", n.d., n.pag.), evoke a kind of childhood that is foreign to those participants who were children while, or after, digital technologies became ubiquitous, and amplify lived childhood experiences for those

participants who were children before. Emotional time-travel or temporal vertigo, to use Segal's term from Chapter One, can ease individuals into sideways growth.

Camp Wildfire's immersion of its participants in nostalgia through evoking (past) childhood experiences, both in terms of personal meanings and the overarching theme of 1950s Scouting, can be read cynically. Denoting "a sentimental longing for the past" (Baldwin & Landau, 2013, p. 1), nostalgia may signal stasis or regression rather than development and, for Nodelman, as I highlighted in Chapter One, adult nostalgia for childhood is "fruitless" because it is "a lust for something we simply cannot have anymore" (1996, p. 81). Considering that one of the organisers, Julia Lowe, is in the band Keston Cobblers' Club whose album release *Wildfire* coincided with the launch of Camp Wildfire and who always play the festival, a cynical reading sees Camp Wildfire as a marketing ploy that taps into a wider interest in adult play through nostalgia and exploits the general trend for adult play for commercial gain. However, psychologists Matthew Baldwin and Mark J. Landau's research suggests that "nostalgia promotes psychological growth", by which they mean "the potential to cultivate inner ptentialities, seek out optimal challenges, and integrate new experiences into the self-concept" (2013, p.1), because it bolsters self-esteem and fosters "a desire to explore" (p. 13). Being a commercial enterprise in a capitalist market that furthers nostalgia and seeks to profit from consumers' interest in play need not prevent Camp Wildfire from facilitating sideways growth.

Camp Wildfire's organisers encourage participants to dress up in Scout uniforms and thereby create an atmosphere conducive to playful experimentation and community. Hence, Camp Wildfire contributes to a wider trend, discussed in Chapter Two, that sees dressing up as empowering adults by facilitating different attitudes and behaviours. Scout uniforms, as envisioned by the movement's founder Robert Baden-Powell in *Scouting for Boys: A Handbook for Instruction in Good Citizenship* (1908), are based on military uniforms and include a khaki hat, a scarf or neckerchief that declares Troop membership

through its colour, a shirt or jersey, and shorts – each item has a clear function and the uniform is "comfortable, serviceable, and a good protection against the weather" (1908/2003, pp. 23-24). The jersey's sleeves are to be rolled up "as a sign that [Scouts] are ready to carry out their Motto" (p. 24), which is "BE PREPARED" and means being "always in a state of readiness in mind and body to do your DUTY" such as obeying orders and dealing with "any accident or situation that might occur" (p. 19). At Camp Wildfire, staff and participants dress up in Scout uniforms by wearing them out of their original Scouting context, and also alter Scout uniforms. Importantly, dressing up within Camp Wildfire deviates from the rigid ideas of behaviour outlined by Baden-Powell. Instead, the clothes convey a nostalgic idea of Scouting while the organisers simultaneously encourage participants to "dance around [. . .] like lunatics" ("FAQs", n.d., n.pag.). The organisers' instructions mandate that staff: "MUST wear THE CORRECT UNIFORM AT ALL TIMES", which includes boiler suits, neckerchiefs, and hats, because "Wildfire is an immersive event" ("2017 Activity Leader Info", 1 Jun. 2017, n.pag.). However, as "[t]he look [they] are going for is VIntage [sic] Scouts, Swallows and Amazons, Wes Anderson's Moonrise Kingdom" ("2017 Activity Leader Info", 1 Jun. 2017, n.pag.), the organisers also re-imagine both Baden-Powell's Scouting uniform and his idea of Scouting by including references to fictional children's adventures. In 2015, Camp Wildfire patrol leaders combined Scout shirts with velvet leggings, green Converse, colourful socks, or patterned trousers, or wore their Scout shirts unbuttoned over other shirts (see fig. 3). Participants have been emailed kit lists that propose wearing practical clothes, resembling Scout uniforms, for camp activities, such as "[t]ucked-in polo shirts" and "[k]haki shorts or rolled up trousers" ("Wildfire Location Revealed!! And More . . .", 10 Jun. 2015, n.pag.), and are, through Facebook posts, alerted to the Camp Wildfire uniform, for sale on site. As they depict females and males in sexualised ways – the female model, for example, strikes a particular pose and wears the Wildfire shirt as a dress (see fig. 3) – the posted

photographs of Camp Wildfire uniforms expand Baden-Powell's sense of Scouts and Scouting activities. The 2015 kit list also includes glitter ("IMPORTANT: Wildfire Itinerary and Inventory", 14 Jun. 2015, n.pag.), which further subverts Baden-Powell's idea of the Scout uniform because it serves no practical Scouting purpose and is a dressing-up tool. Having received less insistent instructions than staff, 2015 participants wore a haphazard mixture of Scout uniforms and idiosyncratic clothes, including dinosaur jumpers, colourful knitwear, unicorn hats, and Disney-print leggings.

Figure 3. Patrol leaders at Camp Wildfire 2015, photograph by Liam Keown (left), and Camp Wildfire Facebook post directing participants' clothing for the 2018 festival (right, 13 Aug. 2018).

Wildfire appearances tangibly affected people's experiences. I argue that they, alongside other measures such as going analogue, enabled, rather than were a side-effect of, what reviewers and participants agree was a time of community, where people are open to learning and "more willing to strike up a conversation, even if they have never spoken before" (Vincent, 30 Jun. 2015, n.pag.) in a "happy and energetic" atmosphere (qtd. in Bassil, 22 Jun. 2015, n.pag.). Adults wearing what they wore as children or would be unable to wear to work, in a backstage-of-adulthood context that encourages experimentation, are less easily embarrassed. In 2015, a couple whom I complimented on their glittery faces even took me to, in their phrasing, "score glitter" off another friendly

stranger. A word more commonly used for buying illegal and intoxicating substances, *scoring* here refers to an ingredient for dressing up, shared rather than bought. This usage of *scoring* suggests that Camp Wildfire creates a somewhat secret community of people in the know. Although scoring glitter is not illegal, it still requires special knowledge about who might have some when and where. Furthermore, *scoring*'s connotation implies that the Wildfire community, albeit not criminal, is not completely acceptable in mainstream culture. Indeed, wearing symbolic clothes of childhood outside of the Wildfire context would be, as suggested by the discussion of uniforms and onesies in Chapter Two, frowned upon as a sign of regression, immaturity, or perversion. Adjusting Baden-Powell's vision, Camp Wildfire suggests combining practical, comfortable clothes and items that have no obvious practical function such as glitter, and actively encourages people to transcend uniformity, for example through dressing up further. Camp Wildfire subverts Baden-Powell's ideas of neatness and uniformity in favour of idiosyncrasy, and asks participants for readiness to experiment instead of readiness to "do [their] duty". Camp Wildfire provides adults with an opportunity to exchange symbolic clothes of adulthood with those of childhood or combinations of their own invention, alongside discarding adult expectations of respectable behaviour and responsibilities. Through relaxing vestimentary and behavioural age boundaries in a space that suspends some structures of upwards growth by excluding children, Camp Wildfire enables participants to explore aspects of sideways growth.

Indicating a particular focus for such sideways growth, the organisers draw on the way in which play shapes Scouting's structure and activities. As Huizinga notes, "the Scout Movement expressly styles itself a game" (1944/1980, p. 206; cf. Baden-Powell, 1908/2003, p. 266); Camp Wildfire is similarly framed as a play opportunity. However, I argue that Camp Wildfire employs the 'play ethos' of Scouting as liberally as it uses Scout uniforms, transforming the Scout Movement's idea of play as an educational tool for

upwards growth into alternative ideas of being and growing. Baden-Powell envisions play as a tool for teaching Scouting skills such as pioneering, and, most importantly, "good citizenship": the purpose of Scouting is "not merely to give you fun and adventure but [. . .] fitting yourself to help your country and be of service to other people who may be in need of help" (1908/2003, p. viii). By virtue of these goals, Scouting associates play with obedience and upwards growth. Inspired by his own military education, Baden-Powell demands military-style obedience to adults of children: "A Scout obeys orders of his parents, Patrol Leader, or Scout-master without question." (p. xii). The arrow on the Scout Badge is described as "point[ing] in the *right* direction, and *upwards*" (p. 19, emphasis added); by extension, upwards growth into an adulthood of good citizenship is the preferred, right, direction of growth. Hence, play, instead of being enjoyed for its own sake, mainly serves to teach the skills, values, and rules embedded in the grand narrative of growth.

In contrast, at Camp Wildfire, play is used to facilitate curiosity and abandon. Whereas the Scout slogan "BE PREPARED" (Baden-Powell, 1908/2003, p. 19) implicitly carries the objective of instruction in "good citizenship", of being prepared for adult life, Camp Wildfire's motto "only the curious" favours inquisitiveness over obedience, and exploring the present over preparing for future roles. The adjective *curious* envisions implied festival participants as having a desire to know or learn, and an interest in seeking out *curiosities*, potentially absurd non-mainstream novelties. The name *Wildfire* itself suggests riotously spreading enthusiasm, passion, or danger rather than rational, controlled behaviour, and evokes non-normative associations such as Halberstam's theorisation of *wild*, which I investigate in Chapter Four. The Wildfire Camp Code, included in the *Adventurer's Handbook* each participant received at the 2015 festival, asks participants to "Adventure like a child", "Explore new things", and "Have immeasurable amounts of fun" (n.pag.), and, therefore, seeks to suspend adult inhibitions by relating expected camp

behaviour to childhood and play. While asking adult participants to inhabit, or perform, childhood could be read as a call for regression, the Camp Code, encouraging the participants to cultivate curiosity and seek out new experiences, can facilitate emotional, intellectual, and physical sideways growth.

The specifics of such growth are shaped by the activities Camp Wildfire offers, which extend the festival's ambiguous relationship with Baden-Powell's notion of Scouting and play. Some Camp Wildfire activities, for example Firelighting (2015; 2016), Pioneering (2015; renamed Bivouac Building in 2016), and Wild Game Preparation (2015), teach skills akin to those Baden-Powell values but prioritise fun over achievement, as is evident in these participants' facial expressions:

Figure 4. Participants in the activity Assault Course, photograph by Louise Roberts (2016)

Although not succeeding at their task, both participants are exuberant – they can play their roles badly without punitive consequences. The protective state of a play situation allows them to fail, show weakness, and abdicate adult authority. On equal footing with traditional Scouting activities, Camp Wildfire activities include a wide variety of play types: ukulele (2015) and hula hoop (2016; 2017) lessons; choir (2015; 2016; 2017) and life drawing sessions (2015; 2016; 2017); tie-dying (2016; 2017), ceilidh (2015) and swing dancing

(2015; 2016; 2017); and a Zombie Run (2017). Like Scout Camps, Camp Wildfire runs its planned activities on a tight schedule that starts early in the morning, perhaps adapting Baden-Powell's assertion that "by getting up early you get more time to play" (1908/2003, p. 96) to use time to organise people for maximum play for play's sake rather than for maximum productivity and upwards growth, as chronormative time would. There also are impromptu tugs of war (2015; 2017), skipping rope games (2015), campfire jams (2015; 2016), and games of chess and cards (2015). Neither teaching traditional Scouting skills nor other skills associated with adulthood, these activities are even further removed from Scouting's idea of playing for the external purpose of upwards growth. Some, such as skipping rope games, are particularly reminiscent of play behaviours conventionally associated with childhood. Such pursuits can be enriching even physically; Erikson notes that activities such as jumping and juggling extend the sense of one's body, for "to juggle, to jump, or to climb adds unused dimensions to the awareness of our body. Play here gives a sense of divine leeway, of excess space" (1950/1995, p. 191). Moreover, the casual, celebratory, and inclusive atmosphere of the festival, advanced by cheerfully open-minded staff and participants, creates a play community where spontaneous invitations to play can easily be extended to and accepted by strangers, as informally as the stereotypical child at the door asking whether another child can come out to play. I myself played chess (2015, both in twos and, perhaps less conventionally, in threes) and Frisbee (2017), and danced (2015; 2016; 2017) with people I had not met before. While not contending that every participant felt included and playful at all times, I assert that the possibility of play, and, moreover, informal play, more commonly associated with childhood, was present more casually and ubiquitously than in other typical adult-only contexts.

At Camp Wildfire, adults perform childhood without claiming authenticity. For example, activities include nipple tassle making and speed dating, which are not conventionally considered to be play types suitable for children and, of course, the

participants never actually become children physically, emotionally, or intellectually. They immerse themselves in play but not to the point of forfeiting all other aspects of their identity, as Darke does in *The Child in Time*. Unlike him, they are allowed to combine aspects of childhood and adulthood in agefluid identities. The atmosphere and activities encourage adults physically to move in unexpected ways, to be emotionally open and experiment, and to intellectually face tasks untypical of conventional adulthood; thus, in a sense, adults can transcend their age category and pursue enrichment instead of Baden-Powell's progress. In some ways, then, Camp Wildfire has more affinities with modern Scouting than with the 1950s Scouting evoked by its own advertising. Modern British Scouting is more play-oriented, and, using the slogan "Imagine the adventures" in their promotional video for potential adult volunteers "Think You Know Scouting? Think Again" (12 Oct. 2010, n.pag.), recognises that adults are also attracted by play. However, Camp Wildfire goes beyond this recognition that adults enjoy play as activity leaders for children, and gives them unrestricted access to it for their own benefit. The affinity to modern British Scouting also manifests in terms of gender. Modern British Scouting describes itself as a "mixed youth organisation" ("What We Do", n.d., n.pag.) rather than dividing its members into Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, and Camp Wildfire also offers play across genders. Moreover, Camp Wildfire, by offering a variety of play experiences, valuing enrichment, and encouraging and rewarding curiosity through its motto, handbook, and activities, provides training for the unexpected in the sense of developing skills that benefit individuals who are inclined towards aspects of queer time in the sense of Halberstam's definition of it as diverging from chrononormative trajectories, for example through "embrac[ing] [. . .] late childhood" (Dinshaw et al, 2007, p. 182). For the duration of the festival, then, participants are, whether consciously or not, exploring sideways growth through forming communities in which adults can access attitudes and behaviours otherwise associated with childhood and strive to experiment and learn skills for

enrichment's sake rather than for upwards progress. Camp Wildfire leans towards queer time rather than chrononormative time, towards growing sideways, also because of its play schedule, which disturbs conventional patterns of a working day, its exclusion of children, and its wider temporary suspension of conventional social structures. However, the festival can neither promise nor impose sideways growth and it depends on each individual whether they engage with it and how far they take it. The performative role play offered to children in KidZania London takes a different approach, seemingly appealing to participants through aspects of sideways growth while, in fact, selling an experience of chrononormative upwards growth.

(Role-)Playing Adulthood

KidZania London, instead of claiming a space for a temporary event, is a permanent location that participants enter temporarily. Whereas Camp Wildfire, in some ways, allows adults to imaginatively role-play childhood, KidZania London is a 75,000 square feet theme park in the shape of a miniature city explicitly providing educational career role play for children: "KidZania is a City for 4 – 14 year olds with more than 60 real life role play adventures" (KidZania, n.d. a, n.pag.). I propose that KidZania London's type of role-playing adulthood leans towards chronormative rather than queer time: although it may queer age categories and approximate sideways movements for the duration of participants' stay there, KidZania London ultimately seeks to perpetuate chrononormative ideas of upwards growth.

In *Mythologies*, Barthes notes that toys impart values, instructing children in their gendered adult roles, for "[a]ll the toys one commonly sees are essentially a microcosm of the adult world" (1957/2013, p. 53). Offering an entire 'city' of miniature workplaces as play spaces, KidZania London strives more concretely to provide such a microcosm. Children dress up as adults, in work-related uniforms, to role-play adult occupations, such

as working in a police station, a hospital, and a supermarket. Dressing up in standardised symbolic clothes of adulthood provided on site, child participants are directed to conform to age-specific roles. In contrast, Camp Wildfire's participants are also encouraged to alter and adjust symbolic clothes of childhood and idiosyncratically transform age-specific roles. Like Miranda, Andy, and the Dressing-up Dad, for example, Camp Wildfire's participants wear such clothes voluntarily, casually, and imaginatively in ways that can be empowering in their diversion from upwards growth. While Camp Wildfire's myriad play types are subsumed under the implicit overall idea of imaginatively role-playing childhood in ways that can facilitate sideways growth, KidZania London focuses exclusively on role play and frames it with a clear educational purpose in line with the grand narrative of growth: "Each activity offers a unique role-play experience where kids learn financial literacy, careers, teamwork, independence and real-life skills" (KidZania, n.d. c, n.pag.). This framing of play as instructive is reminiscent of Baden-Powell's notion of play.

However, play serves to instruct children in a particular kind of adulthood in KidZania, a capitalist adulthood as workers and consumers. Its motto "Work, Earn, Play!" (KidZania, n.d. b, n.pag.), naming play last, prioritises work over play. True to its motto, KidZania pays children in kidZos, its fictional currency, for entering the theme park and for their activities within it, and then expects them to spend their earnings. Children are to play at learning skills for adult work to earn money that is spent playing at being a customer. In an interview, founder and C.E.O. of KidZania Xavier López Ancona admits to this capitalist undercurrent of play: "[KidZania] is their world, where they [children] are not being told what to do. [. .] *Just cash your check, get money, and start spending money – that is the only thing we tell them.*" (Mead, 19 Jan. 2015, n.pag., emphasis added). The extent of this undercurrent is evident in the option of citizenship in KidZania, complete with a "pazzport" really being, in Lopez's words, "a loyalty program" enabling the company to track children's activities and interests for marketing purposes (Mead, 19 Jan.

2015, n.pag.). While children may enjoy the experience or even play in the theme park subversively, for example by pursuing other play types than career role play, KidZania can be seen to operate within a capitalist framework that instructs children to grow up into functioning adult workers and consumers.

Furthermore, this citizenship/loyalty scheme is troubling because it normalises control and surveillance through play. Jill Walker Rettberg's analysis of selfie-lenses in smartphones makes a relevant point about such play. Selfie-lenses use biometrics to measure faces and superimpose masks, for example turning smartphone users' faces into animal faces. According to Walker Rettberg, these features of selfie-lenses encourage users to play with biometrics for entertainment (31 Aug. 2016, n.pag.). Using it for play frames this technology as harmless and desensitises users towards its other purposes, as an invasive surveillance technology (Walker Rettberg, 31 Aug. 2016, n.pag.). As users play with masks, biometrics minutely measure their faces. KidZania's citizenship/loyalty scheme similarly primes its users for submitting to being controlled. Indeed, the theme park misrepresents itself as a liberating environment for children. While Camp Wildfire is strictly adult-only, KidZania London is not strictly child-only. Parents of up-to-seven-year-olds must accompany their children, and all children are guided in their role play by adult staff. Although KidZania, according to the company website, was allegedly established as a children's nation, complete with a Declaration of Independence by children from adults (KidZania, n.d. c), it upholds an aetonormative power hierarchy, with adults, as experts, in charge of children, organising children's play. Reflecting this difference in status and power, adult staff are poignantly called "Zupervisors" (Mead, 19 Jan. 2015, n.pag.). Instead of giving children autonomy and agency regarding the make-up of the place and their activities within it, as the concept of a children's nation would suggest, KidZania London is a mass commercial venture. KidZania London is part of a global chain launched in 1999; entry for children costs £18; it is situated in the shopping centre Westfield; and the

role-playing activities are sponsored by mass consumer brands such as H&M, Bank of England, and Renault. Dependent on corporate sponsors, KidZania offers brands a unique marketing opportunity; KidZania executive Maricruz Arrubarrena states that KidZania allows brands to "work with [. . .] kids, and in the future build a more loyal client" (Mead, 19 Jan. 2015, n.pag.). KidZania is an adult-created environment, interwoven with ulterior (corporate) adult motives, posing as a children's nation. That it masks upwards growth into adult consumers by way of promising children an escape from aetonormative structures suggests that aspects of sideways growth are profitable. By taking children out of their everyday roles and offering them roles usually reserved for adults, KidZania London could potentially allow children, however artificially, surveilled, temporarily, and inconsequentially, to transcend constraints of childhood and perform aspects of adulthood. Yet, aetonormative hierarchies prevail – through adult supervision and using children's play for ulterior adult motives – instead of being subverted or even entirely suspended; KidZania does not treat participating children as adults but as children who (should) desire to grow up. KidZania aims to prepare children for chrononormativity, upwards growth, and a surveillance society rather than for queer time, sideways growth, and the right to privacy and, by extension, autonomy. Organising participatory play opportunities for children, instead of for adults, adult organisers seem to continue to understand play in terms of the grand narrative of growth.

Similarly recognising, and monetising, a particularly twenty-first century desire in adults to play with adulthood, KidZania London occasionally reserves its "children's nation" for "Adults' Evenings", during which adults are invited to role play for £30 per person, alcoholic beverages included (KidZania, n.d. d). These participatory events potentially destabilise notions of upwards growth by instigating adults to play at being adults, exposing absurdities in the conventions of work and adulthood, and allowing for liberating laughter at or respite from 'real' adult (working) life. However, considering

KidZania's basic concept of children playing at being adults, adults may, in fact, be playing at being children playing at being adults, and metaphorically, as well as literally, tower patronisingly over this child-size, miniature city. KidZania London offers adults a parallel, off-kilter version of their everyday lives, where work roles become play and where the atmosphere, not least because of the alcoholic beverages and the absurdity of the situation, is exuberant. While some adults may, as in the promotional video "KidZania London's Adults' Evenings", feel that "it's like being a kid" (21 Jan. 2016, 01:58), the KidZania experience has no framework encouraging adults to continue this playful approach to work post-event. In contrast, Camp Wildfire's framework fosters traits such as curiosity that can be carried into queer time. Just as KidZania London uses children's play as capitalist training for an expected future as adult workers and consumers, visiting KidZania London may also be capitalist training for some adults if it triggers re-wonderment at the world of work.

KidZania London's version of role-playing adulthood is less interested in sideways growth than Camp Wildfire's version of role-playing childhood. Although child and adult participants role-playing adulthood in this special context can queer age categories, the theme park, invested in capitalism and consumerism, frames these experiences in a way that encourages subscribing to conventional upwards growth, and promotes normative trajectories (work), rather than subverting normative behaviours and attitudes. Where Camp Wildfire allows for role-playing a more idiosyncratic and flexible Scout camp experience, and, within that, role-playing imaginative scenarios, for example sword-fights, KidZania London decidedly focuses on realistic scenarios for role play, such as working in a shop. As López states, KidZania "immerse[s] our visitors in a simulated reality [. . .]. It's having the real buildings, materials, products, and services. This is not about fantasy. This is not princesses and dwarfs" (Mead, 19 Jan. 2015, n.pag.). It is telling that López's examples of fantasy, princesses and dwarfs, because they evoke stereotypical fairy tale

characters, are not necessarily more imaginative than shopkeeping. However, even KidZania's 'realistic' hands-on career experience has an element of pretend and fantasy, as Rebecca Mead observes of KidZania Cuicuilco: "[m]ost of the industrial processes are simulated: the packaged granola bars that pop out of the final machine are factory made, switched in at the last moment." (19 Jan. 2015, n.pag.). It also, necessarily, for reasons of managability and safety, provides a superficial idea of available careers and those careers' individual tasks and challenges. Although KidZania London invites children to perform adulthood 'realistically', it is as unrealistic as adults' performances of childhood at Camp Wildfire. Moreover, children are aided (or impeded) in their performances by adult supervisors and, by the theme-park-isation of adulthood encouraged to invest in a capitalist future that is less likely than Camp Wildfire's nostalgia to facilitate sideways growth because it is explicitly directed towards upwards growth. Not all participants in these participatory play opportunities will play along: children may ignore adult direction and play on different terms in KidZania London, and adults may not explore growing sideways through Camp Wildfire. However, their frameworks steer participants into decidedly different directions. Whereas Camp Wildfire invites adults through nostalgia into imaginatively role playing childhood and playing in general, KidZania London invites children (and adults) through the promise of future-oriented play into a sinister, rigid, corporate structure hostile to imaginative play.

Together, Camp Wildfire and KidZania London indicate wider implications. Both, if to different extents, use play as a commodity. Although play is potentially free (financially) and spontaneous, in some cases, particularly for adults, it is expensive and organised. Capitalism can stifle play's potential for sideways growth by making it expensive: not everyone can afford a ticket. For children especially, organised play may come with ulterior motives: interested in producing consumers, KidZania London uses play as capitalist training for the expected rather than subversive training for the

unexpected. If play is for profit, it may affect the accessibility, quality, and potential of that play. Moreover, Camp Wildfire and KidZania London suggest that, although children and adults increasingly engage in the same types of play, for example role play, they mostly do so separately, even where their particpatory play opportunities occupy the same physical space, as in KidZania London. These participatory play opportunities also recognise a wider desire for playing with age categories, suggesting that age categories can be performed, assumed, discarded. In this sentiment, participatory play opportunities that encourage performative role play are symptomatic of a wider cultural phenomenon: the concept of adulting.

Adulting

The term *adulting* emerged on social media around 2008 and, by 2016, had gained enough traction to feature in Oxford Dictionaries' Word of the Year shortlist (Oxford Dictionaries, 16 Nov. 2016, n.pag.). Transforming the noun *adulthood* into a verb, *adulting* implies that adulthood is an action rather than a static state. It refers to adults playing at being adults, and thereby challenging their adult status, because they lack either skills that adults are conventionally assumed to have mastered, or interest in conventional manifestations of adulthood. While it is difficult to trace their temporal and geographical origin, memes, a humorous way of transporting cultural messages in social media, illuminate a range of ideas feeding into *adulting*. My Google image search of "adulting", for example, included the following memes: a photograph of a woman with her arms raised on a mountain meadow with the words "Look at me adulting all over the place!", a dog lying on its belly in an exhausted manner with the words "Please don't make me adult today", and a light blue background with the words "I'M DONE ADULTING LET'S BE MERMAIDS" in caps. "Look at me adulting all over the place!" seems to relate a woman's exuberant posture to succeeding at being an adult, framing adulthood as an achievement worthy of

praise rather than an automatic result of upwards growth. However, as the image is a still from the opening scene of Robert Wise's 1965 musical film *The Sound of Music*, she is a nun in training having left her abbey without permission, to dance, and sing about hills "alive with the sound of music" (02:21) and her "heart want[ing] to [. . .] laugh like a brook" (02:43). In this scene, she is escaping adult responsibilities through imaginative play (personifying hills) with abandon (a laughing heart). The actor Julie Andrews also carries associations of being both a responsible, strict adult and a facilitator of magical play opportunities from her previous role as Mary Poppins in Robert Stevenson's 1964 musical film adaptation of Travers's work. Hence, this meme links adulting to tensions between responsibilities and imaginative play. As the scene ends with abbey bells calling the nun in training to her duties, respite from adult responsibilities is temporary but possible. Adulting, here, implies negotiating a balance between work and play that sustains the individual rather than conventional expectations of adulthood. "Please don't make me adult today" depicts adulthood as a chore, as a behaviour that can be forced upon people and requires energy. Intensifying these implications of adulting, "I'M DONE ADULTING LET'S BE MERMAIDS" suggests that, instead of conforming to or performing adulthood or taking escapist breaks from it, you can invent your own definitions, and use your imagination to play a role that suits you more, either temporarily ("I'm done adulting for now") or permanently ("I'm done with adulting altogether"). Such uses of *adulting* indicate that adulthood is increasingly conceived of as a role-playing game, as something that can be taken up or discarded at will, rather than as a permanent stage of growth. I use the term *adulting* as shorthand for understanding adulthood as a set of discardable performances. Unsettling ideas of adults as stable, competent, and independent beings paves the way for messier notions of growth, such as growing sideways.

The idea of adulthood as role play – as a potentially voluntary, reversible, and imaginary performance – is reflected across cultural forms. Alongside KidZania London

and Camp Wildfire, playing with age categories can also be traced in parent-child inversion narratives, to borrow Arthur Adrian's term for a typical Dickensian narrative pattern (1971, p. 5). In turn-of-the-twenty-first century examples such as Wilson's *The Illustrated Mum* (1999), Lucy Daniel Raby television series *Big Kids* (2000), Simon Mason's *Moon Pie* (2011), Gill Lewis's *Scarlet Ibis* (2014), and Sarah Crossan's *Apple and Rain* (2014), children take on adult roles when their parents are unable to fulfil them due to hypnosis (*Big Kids*), illness (*The Illustrated Mum*, *Scarlet Ibis*), addiction (*Moon Pie*), and selfishness (*Apple and Rain*). In turn, some parents exhibit play behaviours – for example dressing up as fantasy characters (*Big Kids*, 2000, E2), make-believe (Wilson, 1999/2012, pp. 74-75, cf. p 275), "waltz[ing] down the street" at night (Mason, 2011, p. 39), and playing Truth or Dare "like [. . .] in primary school" (Crossan, 2014, p. 194) – that, as in *The Child in Time*, mainly serve as symptoms of their incompetence as adults. However, these child and adult characters' inverted performances are temporally limited, like participatory play opportunities, and presented as unnatural and unconventional. As the parents are either cured (*Big Kids*) or replaced by strict grandparents (*Apple and Rain*, *Moon Pie*) and foster families (*Scarlet Ibis*), such narratives frequently conclude by reinstating the status quo and reinforcing aetonormative ideas.

A literary example closer to Camp Wildfire and KidZania's immersive role play, Boyce's *Cosmic* (2008) grants its protagonist more scope and agency than conventional child-parent inversion narratives. Liam, passing for adult through his appearance, as I discussed in Chapter Two, performs adulthood through play, by treating it as a video game. An avid player of the massively multiplayer online role-playing game *World of Warcraft*, Liam applies the gaming concepts of *Levelling Up* (increasing a character's abilities) and *Engaging* (deciding to, for example, fight monsters) to (performing) adulthood. He understands his trip to China for a "greatest dad" competition as a new challenge in the game of adulthood:

> If Liverpool city centre was Level Two, a secret location in China must be Level Fifty at least. [. . .] I was going to skill up before levelling up. In World of Warcraft you can have weapon skills, gathering skills or trade skills. [. . .] If I was going on a quest disguised as Florida's dad, I would need dad skills (2008/2009, p. 67)

Treating the competition, and by extension adulthood, as a quest frames adulthood as a set of conventions and rules in opposition to the grand narrative idea of adulthood as a superior state of being resulting from upwards growth. Because Liam passes successfully, adulthood is presented as a game that anyone, irrespective of chronological age (although appearance matters), can play, and even excel at. Somewhat ironically, playing 'makes' Liam an adult. This suggests that conventional adulthood, even for adults, involves playing, in the sense of performing to certain expectations. Growing sideways, then, can take advantage of such expectations, rather than be trapped by them, through manipulating them at will.

In China, Liam frequently challenges adults by *Engaging* them. When admonished as "childish" by an adult competitor for an unconventional golf move, Liam copes with the situation in video game register: "He really thought he was a Level Forty monster and I was some sort of Level Seven baby warrior [. . .]. But I had my mental elixir. I let it fill my brain and then I Engaged" (p. 121). Liam counterattacks by noting that no decent parent would allow their child to travel to outer space unsupervised, "without an accompanying adult" (p. 122), which is the secret objective of the entire competition. He defeats this adult by weakening his adult status through casting him as a monster, and convinces the competition's organiser to let a father accompany the children. As Liam himself longs for outer space, through video game strategies, he has created an opportunity for himself in 'real' life that was unavailable before. Liam plays adulthood in the sense of successfully passing for adult and also in the sense of manipulating conventions of adulthood for his own gain. The phenomenon of adulting, from its manifestations in social media to play

opportunities to fiction, suggests that adulthood is not an automatic result of growth but a set of conventions and expected behaviours and attitudes. Hence, sideways growth, either by re-defining adulthood idiosyncratically or inventing another alternative altogether, is equally, if not more, valid. Camp Wildfire suggests that childhood also is playable to an extent. While Liam is unable, as I highlighted in Chapter Two, to drop his performance at will, the next section focuses on people who refuse to stop playing (their version of growth).

Play(-fulness) as a Queer Way of Life

Playing with age categories can be a long-term endeavour beyond performative role play during participatory events. I explore this endeavour further through the concept of playfulness, which I understand as an attitude, a way of growing sideways that, through living in queer time, challenges the grand narrative of growth. In this sense, playfulness is a commitment to playing with linear trajectories in order to adapt them to idiosyncratic needs or altogether leaving them for other possibilities. As playfulness is a less socio-culturally acceptable, and therefore potentially more subversive, trait in adults than in children, my analysis will primarily focus on adults but includes examples of child-adult play communities. Joosen's discussion of playful adult protagonists in children's literature suggests that play can render adult characters dynamic, with a "profound interest in their surroundings and in new experiences", and bring them into "'lateral contact'", in Stockton's sense, with children (2018, p. 87). Representations of playful adults across cultural forms from my corpus imply that playfulness is a valid, valuable, and sustainable way of living on both an individual and a communal level. Situating them amongst representations of female playfulness in Brahmachari's children's novel *Artichoke Hearts*,

Jeffers's picturebook *The Heart and the Bottle*, and Byatt's novel for adults *The Children's Book* (2009), I analyse Tunnard's film *Adult Life Skills* and Hart's sitcom *Miranda* as examples of female individuals pursuing play(-fulness) as a way of life. I also examine Almond's children's novel *My Dad's a Birdman*, Boyce's children's novel *Framed*, and Meadows's *This Is England* cycle as examples of playfulness as a group effort, creating communities.

Individual Commitment

In order to explore playfulness as an individual commitment, I focus on representations of female characters to address the concern, raised in the introduction, that, like ideas of appearance, ideas of play are shaped by gendered patterns. For example, American scholar hooks notes that "more often than not narrow-minded thinking about gender continues to be the norm on the playground" (2000, p. 23), and Barthes (1957) observes that gender-specific toys teach gender roles. The serious play of a well-respected organisation, the Scouting Movement, for a specific instructional purpose framed as beneficial to wider society was first invented for, and long remained more broadly associated with, males. In Edwardian Britain, Scouting activities were not deemed suitable for females and, two years after the first Boy Scout camp, in 1910, Baden-Powell founded Girl Guides as a separate movement with his sister Agnes and his wife Olave ("The History of Scouting", n.d., n.pag.). While Girl Guiding continues to exist, the (boy) Scout Association first admitted girls to the Venture Scout Section in 1976 and to Beaver Scout, Cub Scout, and Scout Sections in 1991 (Baden-Powell, 1908/2003, p. 277); girls first outnumbered boys in joining the Scout Association in 2011 (Seal, 14 Apr. 2016, n.pag.). Albeit preparing players for an equally serious role, domestic play is traditionally framed as a female individual's duty to her family instead of as a community-based effort for a greater social

good. As play has been a vehicle to impose gender-related power structures, it also is a tool to critique such structures.

However, even subversive concepts of play can be gendered. Abrams notes that discussions of gender are "[s]trikingly absent" in concepts of adult play, including Kane's play ethic, although "play is every bit as gendered as work in our society" (13 Nov. 2000, n.pag.). She suggests that, like the work ethic, "the newly hatched play ethic", if articulated by men, risks being dominated by them (13 Nov. 2000, n.pag.). Her evidence of gendered notions of play includes the assumption "that time not at work equals time to play", for this equation fails to consider that certain types of work outside of paid employment, such as household chores and childcare, dominate "non-working time" for many women, while men "have always been rather good at safeguarding their play space and their play time (think pubs, clubs, football pitches)" (13 Nov. 2000, n.pag.). Abrams holds that, for a genuine play ethic, it is necessary to "acknowledge play as [. . .] a political right" (13 Nov. 2000, n.pag.). Some commentary on adulting reflects such gendered notions of play by criticising women in particular for playing with age categories. For example, Danielle Tullo claims that females are "seemingly more likely to use 'adulting'" on social media to celebrate achievements such as not eating Nutella for dinner and interprets this tendency as females "feel[ing] the need to downplay their [professional] accomplishments" (20 Jun. 2016, n.pag.). Consequently, Tullo defines adulting as "a singularly Millennial – especially female, at that – immaturity that reduces being a grown-up to a hobby" (20 Jun. 2016, n.pag.). However, presenting strong examples of female playfulness as a positive alternative to growing up, some fictional representations, especially in my focal texts Tunnard's *Adult Life Skills* and Hart's *Miranda*, indicate possibilities for a less male-biased play ethic.

Brahmachari's children's novel *Artichoke Hearts* (2011) is noteworthy for its depiction of two playful female adult characters. To twelve-year-old protagonist Mira, her

seventy-four-year-old grandmother Nana Josie is "younger than most of the mums and teachers at school" and "fun", because she "get[s] excited about things like painting or music or wrapping presents" (p. 46). Losing the ability to get excited, to approach things playfully, is "what makes you old" (p. 49). Playfulness causes emotional sideways growth, for Josie is perceived as "young" because of her attitude rather than her physical state. Josie even approaches her impending death playfully by painting her coffin with her granddaughter, and supplies the central metaphor of the book, *artichoke hearts*:

> Most people, by the time they get old, have grown themselves tough little shells around their hearts [. . .] to protect themselves [. . .]. These tough outer layers stop you feeling so much, so people walk around with hard little hearts that no one can touch. Of course, there are some people who don't have a choice – they just never learn to protect themselves . . . now that can be a blessing and a burden. (pp. 38-39)

As Josie nurtures playfulness in herself, this metaphor associates playfulness with a kind of vulnerability, feeling deeply, that is discouraged by 'artichokal' upwards growth. It also premises that, initially, in their artichoke heart, everyone is capable of playfulness. Underlining that playfulness is accessible to people other than Josie, and can be inhabited differently, the novel features another unconventional adult character, author Pat Print. Pat "says the opposite of what you would expect most adults to say or think" (p. 6) and is "an expert tree climber" who has "climbed a tree just about every day of [her] life since [she] was four years old" (p. 278). These older characters' playfulness in terms of their contrariness, irreverence, and activities, are presented as ideals through Mira's appreciation of them. Both characters are mentors for her and, thus, pass on the idea of playfulness as a strength from female to female across generations. Through their creative pursuits – Josie paints, Pat and Mira write – playfulness is also tied to creativity. As both engage, and rely on, imagination, playfulness and creativity share, in Wittgenstein's terms, family

resemblances; imagination and creativity can be seen as particular types of playfulness.[20] Brahmachari's novel suggests that growing sideways through playfulness, especially as a female, entails making yourself vulnerable within a society that subscribes to upwards growth, and offers excitement and new perspectives. She also proposes creative pursuits as safe spaces for experimenting with and expressing playfulness.

Jeffers's picturebook *The Heart and the Bottle* (2010) implies that protective artichokal layers can be removed through sideways growth. Here, playfulness manifests as imagination. Described as "a girl, much like any other" (2010, n.pag.), the protagonist stands in for girls in general when she exhibits insatiable curiosity and, with "wonder" and "delight", playfully imagines answers to her questions, for example that stars are burning bees. She is also provided with scientific explanations by her responsible adult. When she loses that adult, she places her heart in a glass bottle to protect it from further grief as she grows up. Excluding possibilities of getting hurt also excludes the unexpected, her playfulness, and the happiness she gained from both: she "forgot about the stars", "stopped taking notice", and only feels the weight of the bottle. Reflecting this loss, her adult face is drawn without a mouth, unable to express herself fully. An encounter with a girl "still curious about the world", who breaks the bottle for her, allows the protagonist to combine her child and adult selves. The final double-page spread depicts her reading – with scientific and imagined answers, such as the burning bees, to her questions merging in a thought bubble. Jeffers, like Brahmachari, presents playfulness in female characters as giving access to unexpected perspectives and deep emotions, and adds that playfulness is recoverable even when lost. Furthermore, the protagonist is unable to break the bottle herself but recognises that "someone smaller and still curious [. . .] might know a way". In another triumph of short child characters, this act implies that some situations require unconventional thinking that upwards growth, unlike playfulness, provides no training for.

[20] I discuss links between imagination and playfulness in more detail on page 192.

Growing sideways through recovering or adjusting playfulness can be accomplished through opening up for childhood, whether by engaging with playful children, as Jeffers's protagonist, or immersing themselves in childhood tropes, as Camp Wildfire's participants.

Playfulness in female adults is also represented in relation to a creative career in Byatt's novel *The Children's Book* (2009). Byatt's character Olive Wellwood is a successful author and playwright for children. Her playfulness is powerful because it transforms and destabilises her physical environment for herself and her children. Led by her imagination, Olive and her children "walked about [. . .] with an awareness that things had invisible as well as visible forms", for example "rabbit warrens" could hold "underground lanes to the land of the dead" and "[a]ny bent twig might be a message or a sign" (2009/2010, pp. 81-82). Their environment's imagined and 'real' features are "interlocked and superimposed" in an unpredicatable way that unsettles boundaries between 'reality' and imagination: "[y]ou could trip out of one and into the other at any moment" (p. 82). Olive's playfulness tangibly shapes the everyday lives of herself and her children, increasing and inventing possibilities. However, it is generally presented negatively in the novel: her daughter Dorothy describes Olive's work as "hopelessly contaminated with play" (p. 514), and Olive exploits her children's play for her career. Her son Tom, in particular, whom Dorothy thinks "[s]omeone should make [. . .] grow up" (p. 514), is the subject of a play Olive writes and kills himself after seeing it, feeling betrayed. Byatt depicts female playfulness as powerful and commercially successful but ultimately unhealthy. *Adult Life Skills* and *Miranda* explore playfulness more exhaustively as a way of living than Brahmachari's and Jeffers's texts, and more positively so than Byatt's.

Adult Life Skills's twenty-nine-year-old protagonist Anna meets responsibilities of adulthood in idiosyncratic ways, without having to grow out of play. Anna's playfulness is shaped by creativity and imagination. She lives in her mother's garden shed. Considering that sheds are often associated with pursuing hobbies and that she uses it for creative,

imaginative play, Anna lives in, rather than occasionally visits, a play space. In the shed, Anna films her thumbs, with faces painted on, having conversations in outer space, for example about nihilism. As she also used to film "bad instruction guides to cope with things in life" (00:54:36) for their website *How to Live Yours* with her now dead twin brother, video-making links her present and her past. Some of the videos they made while he was alive feature their adult bodies, suggesting that both carried play into adulthood. Hence, Anna is not growing sideways as a result of her grief but as part of her overall approach to life. Anna is also playful in her approach to her surroundings. Frequent slow motion shots focus on, for example, an egg carton (00:02:51), a signpost (00:06:10), and a pattern in wood (00:17:36) that resemble faces, sometimes following Anna's eyeline and sometimes allowing viewers to spot faces themselves. Personifying her inanimate surroundings, Anna creates a play space even outside her shed.

Alongside her commitment to play, Anna is coded as irreverent of child-adult boundaries in other respects. She has limited interest or skill in pursuits conventionally expected of adults, especially female adults, and, for example, microwaves her bra and underwear to dry them (00:04:01). She is treated like a child by her mother who monitors her bedtime via a babyphone, worries Anna "look[s] like a homeless teenager" (00:12:58) because of her clothes and hair, and confiscates her laptop or turns off the electricity to prevent Anna from "making them bloody thumb videos" (00:12:53). Her mother actively disrupts Anna's play, and, instead, advocates rites of passage, such as a romantic relationships and moving out, for "it would be healthy for [Anna] to be emotionally involved with someone" (01:01:48), and "it's not normal living in my shed at [Anna's] age" (00:14:36). She insists that Anna moves out by her thirtieth birthday. However, Anna's failures at upwards growth are mediated by being situated through other generations of females, as playfulness is in *Artichoke Hearts*. Her grandmother, who has lived unconventionally, in a commune, wants Anna to change because she is "not really

living" (00:14:54) but, instead of rites of passage, suggests having an "adventure" (00:15:01), and declares that Anna's mother is not excelling at upwards growth either: "despite claiming maturity, your mother just mouthed the words fuck off at me" (00:59:52). Furthermore, the film pairs Anna with male characters who grow sideways through playfulness. Clint, a boy who, like the protagonists of *The Dressing-Up Dad*, dresses up every day, in cowboy clothes, is so influenced by her play that he creates his own play shed. While Anna initially interacts with Clint reluctantly because other adults expect her to assume an adult role and mind him, she comes to admire him for "not [being] scared of messing up" (01:03:21) and not caring what other people think, indicating that her mother's constant criticism is leaving traces. This child-adult relationship is mutually beneficial: they find playmates in each other and are validated in their play pursuits. Anna's adult friend Brendan, who is writing a book about a cat, also champions her playfulness. He takes her Scout shirt, complete with badges, which she wears to work because she has run out of clean clothes, as a chance to define growing up in terms of "adult life skills", suggesting that people "should get badges for [. . .] changing a car tyre or sewing or sending something back in a restaurant, or knitting" (00:28:30). Combined with the film poster's tag line "There's no badge for growing up", his explanation implies that upwards growth into adulthood has no rewards, or perks, and may not be an achievement worth pursuing. Hence, upwards growth may not be worth abandoning play or playfulness for. Indeed, he proposes that Anna should "get a badge for looking for faces" (00:29:09). By rewarding Anna's playfulness, Brendan rewards her sideways growth and emphasises that playfulness is a skill that can be trained and that this skill is both unusual and valuable in an adult. This is a point more widely recognised in the emerging structure of feeling of sideways growth, where the neologism *adulting* suggests that conventional adulthood can be discarded for unconventional performances, and participatory play opportunities for adults abound.

The film concludes with a reconfiguration of the concept of adult life skills. On Anna's thirtieth birthday, her mother's hope that Anna will grow up and out of play contrasts with Brendan presenting Anna with an "adult life skill" badge for being a lone twin (01:45:54). While the badge resembles Scout badges, it does not symbolise Baden-Powell's version of upwards growth into good citizenship. As it is handcrafted by an adult who himself dresses unconventionally, plays creatively, and supports Anna's playfulness, the badge, instead of rewarding Anna for living independently or mourning the loss of her twin brother in a conventional manner, suggests that Anna, by having found a way to keep playing despite mourning, has developed a life skill. Growing sideways by cultivating playfulness in adulthood can increase resilience and be, to use Sutton-Smith's term (2017), *emotional survival*. This life skill is inhabited so successfully by Anna that other adults are unable to convince her to grow out of it (her mother), and even validate it (Brendan). The film does not deny all elements of upwards growth, for Anna leaves the shed to live independently from her family, yet it prioritises continuity between childhood and adulthood through play. Instead of merely leaving the shed, Anna asks Clint to blow it up and uses people's facial reactions to the explosion as another filming opportunity. Thus, she embarks on this rite of passage by turning it, through imaginative and creative acts, into a play situation. Furthermore, Anna leaves some labelled cardboard boxes in the shed; on them, the word *toys* is crossed out (01:43:35), which implies that she decides to keep her toys alongside her playfulness. This suggestion is consolidated by the insertion of another post-explosion thumb video in the credits. Much like Camp Wildfire, the film proposes play as a life skill that is as important for adults as it is for children. Play is a way of growing sideways that children and adults can access equally and together.

The protagonist of *Miranda* takes playfulness further, and even explicitly negotiates, re-negotiates, and articulates her own approach to it. In her mid-thirties, Miranda is also frequently criticised for playing and pronounced an unsuccessful adult by

her friends and family because she is 'failing' in terms of romantic relationships, her career, and adult skills such as cooking, as I noted in Chapter Two. Yet Miranda plays with abandon and through a wide range of play types. For example, Miranda makes fruit friends and vegetapals, and takes this pretend play further by interacting with them, for example as an orchestra she conducts (S1E2, 00:25). As for the protagonists of *The Dressing-Up Dad*, discussed in Chapter Two, dressing up (here as a conductor) is part of Miranda's everyday play repertoire rather than presented as a special occasion. Alongside pursuing play behaviours, Miranda also approaches her daily life playfully: "I think as an adult you should only run if you're near a train station and look at your watch first. I mean galloping is more fun" (S1E3, 00:54). While her view on running is unsurprising, her preferred mode of movement – essentially she is pretending to be a horse – firmly contradicts expectations of adult bodies. In the grand narrative of upwards growth, such pretend play is seen as a particularly immature type of play that individuals are to outgrow even before reaching adulthood. Piaget interprets pretending past middle childhood as a sign of immaturity, as the inability to accommodate reality (in Lillard, 2009, pp. 189-191). Whereas some theorists believe that pretend play "does not disappear, but only goes underground as it becomes socially unacceptable" (Lillard, 2009, pp. 191-201), Miranda emphatically pursues it above ground, in public. Other adult characters in this series also play, but Miranda initiates much of this social play and is the only adult committed to play and shown happily playing on her own. Her joyful facial expressions and level of engagement indicate that Miranda inhabits play firmly and fully and not, as Hollindale writes of adults experiencing childness, merely as a "participant observer" (1997/2001, p. 47). Childness, or more specifically, playfulness, is more widely and fully accessible than Hollindale allows; however, because it goes against conventional expectations related to their age or gender, some people need to work harder than others to claim it. While playful male adult sitcom characters are more abundant, playful female adult characters like Miranda are rare,

perhaps because, as comedian Sally Phillips, who is part of *Miranda*'s cast, observes, it is more difficult for women to "get away with" surrealism and the absurd (personal communication, 7 Jan. 2015). However, as a female, Miranda needs to justify her playfulness. *Miranda*, as a sitcom, benefits from the ongoing comic conflict in which Miranda's chronological age and height, signifying adulthood, and her attitude and behaviour, more easily associated with childhood, are juxtaposed. The grand narrative of growth allows laughter at this comedy of growing sideways, perhaps as a safety valve, but the joke seems to be on notions of growing up rather than Miranda, as I will demonstrate.

Throughout the series, Miranda negotiates perceptions of how she, as a playing and playful adult, fits into or defies the grand narrative of growth, eventually disassociating her play(fulness) from age categories and defining it as jollification. When Stevie pronounces Miranda unfit for "the adult world of relationships" (S3E3, 04:21), Miranda seriously attempts to inhabit conventional adulthood and abandons play. Realising that she prefers playing with her food over cooking it, and has "no interest in abiding by the adult rule book", Miranda re-asserts her interest in play – "I want to do fun things that make me happy, which, by the way, for the record, include making vegetapals. Meet Mr. Butternut" – even if adults "might call [her] a child" in response, for "if adults had even the slightest in-the-moment joy of a child, then, frankly, the world would be a better place" (S3E3, 25:54). While she does not see herself as a child proper nor expresses any desire for reverting or halting growth, Miranda identifies as a child pre-emptively, as a way of continuing to incorporate play into her everyday life. By voicing this identity, she announces that she ceases to seek recognition as an adult by other adults. For Miranda, as for Liam, adulthood is a game; however, since she already is an adult legally, and not interested in a position of adult authority, she plays it idiosyncratically instead of by the conventional "rule book".

In the final episode, Miranda re-negotiates her position on play. After her break-up with Gary, and despite still playful by wearing an animal onesie, as discussed in Chapter Two, she seems to change her parameters of playfulness. That her friends and family worry she is depressed when she pronounces an adult bouncy castle a "childish" idea (SP2, 14:02) indicates that they have accepted her playfulness as an integral part of her identity and consider its disappearance to be 'abnormal' for Miranda. Ultimately, Miranda rearticulates her approach to playfulness. Having "finally worked out who [she] is", Miranda abandons some types of play and disassociates her play(fulness) from age categories:

> there may be no more pushing off the stool or no more fruit friends but I'll always gallop with gay abandon and [. . .] I'll always sing if someone inadvertently speaks song lyrics [. . .]. And that is not being a child. It's just sometimes the world needs to be jollied. (SP2, 23:27)

Throughout the three series and two specials, Miranda gallops in private and in public. In this final episode, Miranda bonds with a horse over being "a fellow galloper" (24:26) and her adult friends, even her mother who is keen on keeping up upper-middle-class appearances, join her in galloping to her wedding (32:16), where her and Gary exchange "the most unusual vows" (33:50). For example, Gary promises "to only ever make sweet muffins" (32:58), prioritising pleasure (sugary treats) over good sense (potentially healthier savoury muffins), and "to remind our children to never stop galloping" (33:21). Thus, getting married, a rite of passage into adulthood, is jollified, in a way that might answer Roman Krznaric's call for *ludus*, playful love, in relationships with romantic partners, family, and friends (2011, p. 8). As Miranda narrates the series herself, and often directly faces the viewers, breaking the fourth wall to indicate when she lies to (S1E1, 07:28) or makes fun of (S1E1, 10:35) other characters and to voice her confusion (S1E1 23:37), she is depicted as in charge of her narrative, even if she fails to be a grown-up within it. She is

presented as a valuable and valid character who is allowed to grow sideways with modifications – no fruit friends but galloping, not a child but jollifying. Other adults joining Miranda's play, particularly her galloping, suggests that the programme's loyalties lie with Miranda rather than with upwards growth.

Miranda demonstrates that being legally adult and engaging with some aspects of adult life, even undergoing rites of passage such as getting married, does not preclude play(fulness). Vice versa, the conventional idea that playful adults are unsuccessful and unable to achieve adulthood is rejected: she can still complete conventional markers of adulthood but chooses which ones (marriage not lucrative career) and adapts them (galloping with the wedding party). Moreover, by rejecting her earlier identification with childhood and, instead, using the term *jollification* to frame playfulness as a long-term strategy, Miranda defines herself sideways. However, *jollification* is also used by Pippi Longstocking in Marianne Turner's translation of Astrid Lindgren's children's novel *Pippi Longstocking Goes Aboard* (1946). Pippi employs *jollyfication* to explain an alternative to conventional school education (1946/2003, p. 284); jollification, as a school subject, involves children playing – "jumping through the window", "giv[ing] a terrific roar", "danc[ing] [. . .] in the rain" – and teachers joining and facilitating this noisy and chaotic play (1946/2003, p. 258). Using the same term as an iconic children's literature character imaginatively continues to place Miranda in correspondence with childhood, suggesting that she can inhabit playfulness as fully as children can even with her rearticulated approach. Miranda's term also implies that, if there is little provision for female playfulness in society, idiosyncratic terminology can assert their play ethic. Darcy's mermelade identity from Chapter Two provides such terminology just as Josie's artichoke hearts metaphor fosters Mira's playfulness, and Brendan's idea of framing playfulness as an adult life skill validates Anna's sideways growth. For Miranda and Anna, it is possible to combine elements of childhood and adulthood without needing to resort to performative

role play; their playfulness, as it is an integral rather than temporary part of their life, situates them in queer time, modifying, instead of entirely discarding, milestones from chrononormative trajectories for sideways growth.

Play Communities

Playfulness can be claimed by individuals as a way of life, of growing sideways, and can also work for, even create, communities. Sociological research asserts that community is "an expression of belonging that is irreducible to any social or political arrangement" (Delanty, 2003, p. 11), and, as such, depends on inclusion and exclusion: humans "are boundary-drawing animals" whose "idea of community [. . .] point[s] towards those who belong together, and those who are held apart" (Day, 2006, p. 2). I propose that playfulness can re-draw, in the sense of queering, boundaries between childhood and adulthood by creating non-conventional communities that may provide long-term alternatives to the grand narrative of upwards growth.

Playfulness holds particular potential for creating such communities because, "engag[ing] in activities in a nonserious or fanciful manner to increase enjoyment" (Glynn & Webster, 1992, p. 83) frequently neccessitates imaginative thinking. Imagination is the ability to play with ideas. Psychologists Tania Zittoun et al. define imagination as "the process of engaging in AS IF thinking, in contrast to AS IS; turning the present and the actual into the possible or the subjunctive actually creates options for the future" (2013, p. 94); hence, imagination allows us to create "mental realit[ies]" where "impossibilities in the outer world become possible and lived experiences" (p. 3). This quality renders imagination pertinent to sideways growth: if upwards growth is a constructed and entrenched grand narrative, then imagination is needed to conceive of alternatives to upwards growth. If religion, democracy, capitalism, culture, arts, science, social hierarchies and other structures are not natural but "imagined orders" (Harari, 2011, pp.

102-18; cf. Nikolajeva, 2017, p. 289), they can be re-imagined. Such re-imagining can be facilitated by re-imagining communities, for all communities are, to some extent, imagined. Benedict Anderson argues that nations are "imagined political communit[ies]" (1983, p. 6), because they consist of more people than can realistically know each other face-to-face – although he states that smaller-size communities may also be imagined (p. 6) – and are "imagined as a community" of "deep, horizontal comradeship" irrespective of any inequality or exploitation present (p. 7). I extrapolate that all communities imagine a sense of belonging despite differences between their members, and propose that communities can be (re-)imagined through playfulness. I argue that this potential is recognised in representations of playfulness that create child-adult communities, by which I mean communities that are composed of children and adults who interact, playfully, as equals. I focus on child-adult communities because they re-draw age boundaries between their members, in contrast to, for example, the adult play community of Camp Wildfire and the child-focused but adult-steered play community of KidZania London. Such child-adult communities are created through make-believe in Almond's *My Dad's a Birdman*, by re-shaping existing a local community in Boyce's *Framed*, and as families of choice in Meadows's *This Is England* cycle.

Representing collective child-adult make-believe, Almond's *My Dad's a Birdman* (2008) suggests that play behaviours can have long-term attitudinal benefits. The story begins like conventional parent-child inversion narratives: after her mother's death, Lizzie finds herself caring for her father Jackie like a parent, making him breakfast and policing his appearance. Jackie's inability or refusal to control his appearance – he wears "a scruffy dressing-gown and his hair [is] all wild and his face all hairy" (2008, p. 8) – signals his loss or rejection of conventional elements of adulthood, for, instead of getting up early to make breakfast for Lizzie, get dressed, and go to work, Jackie is "dreaming" (p. 9). Jackie's choice to dream instead of work, and more specifically, to enter The Great Human Bird

Competition, make-believing that he can "fly [. . .] [j]ust like a bird" (p. 10), is initially dismissed by both child and adult characters as "silly" (p. 11) and "potty" (p. 41), respectively, in line with the grand narrative of growth's idea that play is secondary to work in adulthood and that pretend play is a particularly immature type of play.

However, Almond's narrative is less judgmental of imaginative play in adults than conventional parent-child inversion narratives. Jackie completely immerses himself in his make-believe of becoming a bird. He eats beetles and flaps his arms (p. 15), tweets and squawks (p. 29), analyses birds (p. 47), and crafts wings from bird feathers (p. 34). Asked to provide his occupation when registering for the competition, Jackie even imagines a new identity for himself: "I'm a birdman. I think I used to do something else, but now I can't quite remember what it was. I'm a birdman!" (p. 23). Hence, his make-believe is officially recorded as an adult identity and occupation; play beats, or indeed becomes, work. Whereas adult characters in conventional parent-child inversion narratives ultimately revert to their conventional roles or are replaced as guardians, Jackie remains playful and Lizzie's guardian, and, moreover, becomes part of an expansive play community that includes Lizzie and, eventually, adults who initially criticise Jackie's make-believe.

When Lizzie decides to enter the competition herself, Jackie and Lizzie play together and take this play seriously: they "worked all day and into the night" to make her wings (p. 55). Registering for the competition, Lizzie states her occupation as schoolgirl; Jackie insists "You're more than that! You're a *birdgirl*" (p. 65, emphasis in original). This statement suggests that, irrespective of age, human beings are defined not by their occupation but their imagination. As her father, a male adult, speaks for Lizzie, a female child, his interference may consolidate aetonormative and gendered power structures. However, instead, he interferes to create a play community that frees Lizzie from the confines of school just as it frees him from the confines of work, and where they can play as equals. Illustrating their equality and immersion as play partners further, Lizzie and

Jackie collaborate in idiosyncratic, spontaneous, imaginative play: they make a nest (p. 55) and engage seriously with an "imaginary egg" (pp. 56-57). Lizzie and Jackie are not the only imaginative players within Almond's novel either: the competition is entered by exuberant adults and children from across the world, each with their own methods of propulsion.

The competition itself is playful, rather than a competitive venture that divides its participants into winners and losers. Each player is cheered on and each fall into the river is sympathised with. Lizzie and Jackie's turn demonstrates that this competition prioritises in-the-moment delight and bonding over winning: "[I]t was so weird, so wild, so wonderful. Lizzie looked at her dad leaping at her side. She looked into the wide blue sky and the city stretching out all around them. They flapped their wings and they roared with laughter at the joy and the craziness of it" (p. 106). Because this play provides them with a bond and extraordinary emotions, crashing into the river, failure, is irrelevant: "'I just *laughed*!' said Lizzie. 'It didn't matter'" (p. 115, emphasis in original). Their laughter both acknowledges and dismisses failure, similarly to that of some Camp Wildfire participants (see fig. 4). Almond's choice of becoming a bird as the objective of make-believe is interesting, for birds are metaphorically linked to imagination in the idiom *a flight of imagination*, which denotes ideas that are highly imaginative albeit not very practical. None of the competitors successfully cross the river flying with the devices created through their imagination. Nevertheless, they unashamedly engage their imagination, daring to explore possibilities of playing with gravity, and celebrate each other, and failure, as a play community. Make-believe may not realise fantasies fully, but can benefit its players in facilitating a playful attitude beyond play situations. This play community is so appealing that even Lizzie's teacher joins the competition and her aunt, initially disapproving of Jackie's playfulness as a sign of insanity, cares more about Lizzie and Jackie succeeding as players than they do. In contrast to the temporal boundaries of play in

parent-child inversion narratives, Lizzie and Jackie grow sideways in the sense that both child and adult leave linear trajectories of progress and success (school and work) for community-based ideas of playfulness.

Play can also shape and strengthen existing local communities. In Boyce's *Framed*, exposure to famous paintings, essentially to other people's imagination, inspires the inhabitants of a neglected Welsh village, Manod, to playfully re-imagine their community. In contrast to Quentin Lester, who guards the paintings temporarily stored in Manod and lectures on their histories and techniques, the villagers relate to the paintings emotionally rather than academically, experiencing a boost in playfulness. The mother of child narrator Dylan notes that the people in Pierre-Auguste Renoir's *The Umbrellas* (1881–6) are portrayed as cheerful despite the rain and decides that umbrellas equal happiness: "It's umbrellas. You hardly see umbrellas any more, do you? Don't they look lovely? Like big flowers. And every one of them's got two people under it. Whispering, chatting, laughing. The umbrellas are like parties on sticks" (p. 168). Translating her insight that umbrellas temporarily create space, communities, and fun into her everyday life, she provides free umbrellas for Manod's inhabitants and, subsequently, the daily school runs become colourful visitor attractions. The grieving Mr Davis is similarly affected by Claude Monet's *Bathers at La Grenouillère* (1869). More interested in the hiring arrangements for the depicted boats than in Lester's lecture (p. 212), Davis then reopens the boarded-up boating lake in Manod, despite lacking insurance, for "seeing that picture, I realized I didn't have to lose it all." (p. 221). In turn, the emblem in *The Wilton Diptych* (1395–9), inspires a school class to create a colourful emblem for Manod, with the tag-line "Manod – Somewhere Under the Rainbow" (p. 192-193), which they install as the long-desired motorway sign that the council did not provide because it was "not a funding priority" (p. 12).

Manod's adults and children actively pursue playful ideas sparked by paintings and realise individuals' creative visions collectively: inhabitants use the umbrellas, and a teacher uses school trips to help open the boating lake and install the sign. The involvement of children in these playful endeavours may suggest that adults exploit children's play, while simultaneously implying that they value it and children as partners on equal footing. Instead of waiting for permissions or attention, the townspeople themselves transform their town, from the idea that "[t]he whole of Manod [. . .] is one colour. Slate colour." (p. 21), into a town with daily colourful umbrella parades, a boating lake, an optimistic motorway sign, and a strong, creative, autonomous community growing emotionally and claiming agency irrespective of chronological age. Contrary to commercial ventures such as KidZania and, to some extent, Camp Wildfire, that highlight individual development and pleasure, *Framed* explores more altrustic and communal aspects of playfulness. Here, playfulness is a way of growing sideways that enriches a community and improves its members' wellbeing.

Playfulness can imagine communities across age categories even in unfavourable circumstances. In contrast to McEwan's *The Child in Time*, which depicts Darke without a play community, and play itself as an unsuccessful response to Thatcherism, Meadows's *This Is England* cycle, created at a socio-cultural moment more appreciative of play even as a political return to austerity evokes Thatcher's policies, is more optimistic about playfulness. The cycle is set in 1983, 1986, 1988, and 1990, and thus predominantly covers Thatcher's tenure as Prime Minister (1979–1990), and yet indicates that playfulness can achieve a community in a society wary of community. The negative effect of Thatcherism on ideas of community is evident in her conviction that "there is no such thing as society", that people are responsible for themselves and should not rely on a welfare state (Thatcher, 23 Sept. 1987, pp. 28-30), and in the effect of her policies on mining communities. These ideas have lasting implications, for example causing an anxiety about children becoming

"a violent bunch of bastard little shits" as a result of "spen[ding] ten long years teaching our kids not to care [about community]", as Frank Turner's song "Thatcher Fucked the Kids" (2008) suggests. This anxiety about children, which I discuss in Chapter Four, has also been described as part of a "post-Thatcherite panic", operating on the consensus that "kids needed stamping on" as they had "grown too big [. . .] and dangerous" (Morrison, 6 Feb. 2003, n.pag.), leading to punitive legislation such as Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, which became an instrument for adults to control children to the extent of banning them from socialising with their friends (see Burney, 2008), and, thus, additionally restricted a sense of community in the millennial era. Meadows's film and television cycle *This Is England* proposes that play(-fulness) can create communities outside such mainstream culture. The cycle evokes Thatcher as an omnipresent super adult steering the country, and the protagonists' lives, from atop of society's hierarchy. Thatcher frequently appears in collages of news footage contextualising the plot and is mentioned in conversations between characters. The Falklands War, initiated by Thatcher, results in the death of Shaun's father and leads to his and other characters' interest in nationalism (Meadows, 2006). Unemployment is a staple in the everyday lives of the protagonists. Unlike Darke in McEwan's novel, the protagonists in the *This Is England* cycle have no or little access to conventional adulthood. Instead, Thatcher's idea that "there is no such thing as society" and the kind of adulthood she represents are opposed by the community of the gang.

Small-town working-class youths, the protagonists are neither benefiting from nor fully assimilated into Thatcherism; instead, they identify with their gang, which unites their respective youth subcultures such as skinhead and New Romantic or follows a pattern described by Day as "overlooking or subordinating their [individuals'] differences" in establishing a community (2006, pp. x-xi). The youth subcultures of the 1980s can be seen as a kind of resistance movement, a way for the young to create communities for themselves while the so-called parent culture abandoned them for Thatcher's individualist

and consumerist economy (Snelson & Sutton, 2013, pp. 112-115). The gang expand this notion by also incorporating middle-aged adults and they specifically create their community through play. They destroy empty buildings, the property of adults, in a high-spirited rampage that is part of their ritual of hunting, which involves dressing up, and physical and verbal displays of affection (Meadows, 2006, 18:18). As comic relief after one of their middle-aged members had a heart attack, they have a wheelchair race in a hospital (S1E1, 36:12). Furthermore, they sing loudly in the middle of the night, disturbing the sleep of their elders, to invite Shaun back into the gang after a period of alienation (S1E2, 02:37).

Approaching situations such as reunions and illness playfully and pursuing play behaviours with in-the-moment joy and abandon, they re-draw boundaries of inclusion and exclusion to imagine a family of choice as an alternative to incorporating into Thatcher's society and growing up into adulthood. In a conference paper, Kimberley Reynolds employs *family of choice* in opposition to families of blood, particularly to describe youth identifying with peers rather than with parents, and notes a trend towards it: "increasing numbers of the young remai[n] economically dependent – often living in parental homes after completing their education – while at the same time, their social and emotional allegiances and support have shifted to their peers" (qtd. in Thiel, 2008/2013,). Considering Segal's notion of "queer families of choice" that challenge heteronormative social constructs (2013/2014, p. 246), I suggest that the gang's family of choice opposes adulthood and Thatcherism rather than individual parents. Such families have also been explicitly constructed in opposition to Thatcherism beyond fiction. For example, Sedgwick reclaims the phrase *pretended family* from Section 28,[21] which came into legislation under Thatcher in 1988 and, until completely repealed in 2003, banned local authorities from "promot[ing] homosexuality" and "teaching [. . .] the acceptability of homosexuality as a

[21] While debated in Parliament as Clause 28, upon entering legislation, it became Section 28.

pretended family relationship" (qtd. in McKellen, 1988, n.pag.). Sedgwick uses the phrase to name the particular kind of community she shares with her friends, "proudly call[ing] ourselves after Clause 28: the Extended Pretended Family" (1993/1994, p. 71). Hence, she transforms a phrase intended to dismiss communities lacking blood relations by embracing 'pretending' as an act of valid and valuable imagination that sustains her emotionally through creating a supportive community. Where upwards growth is less attainable or desirable, growing sideways by forming idiosyncratic community structures that operate through unorthodox kinships, based on sideways rather than blood relations, can resist wider social pressures.

The gang's family of choice resists Thatcherism and conventional adulthood through play. Their play behaviours, which would make them likely targets for Anti-Social Behaviour Orders in twenty-first century Britain, defy aetonormative structures by refusing to follow adults' ideas of order (singing), rules (wheelchair race), and ownership (hunting). Destroying physical brick-and-mortar structures built by adults, they metaphorically destroy the house that Thatcher built, which is cold and empty, through play, and build their own community. As these play behaviours can be seen as a waste of time, which they prefer over working even when work is available, as in Woody's case, the gang are not productively contributing to Thatcher's society and, instead, invest in their family of choice. Unlike McEwan, Meadows suggests that a play community that functions as a queer family of choice aside from mainstream culture is possible. Qualities associated with children, which McEwan's Darke sees as "an excess of vulnerability", are celebrated as a strength in Meadows's cycle. Playfulness is rewarded, not punished. Biological parents are not always understanding but always unable to change their children's minds. The affective connections within the gang are so strong that the protagonists frequently sleep cuddling each other (S1E1, 02:51; S1E3, 00:58; S3E2, 28:26), Meggy realises post-heart attack that "love[ing] [them] all" is his life's key achievment, and even small acts of

kindness such as Meggy baking cupcakes invite affection, here Woody's: "Come here and give me a snuggle" (S1E1, 06:33). Through playfulness, the gang imagine a tight-knit community, a "pretended" family of choice, that powerfully resists a political situation unsympathetic to ideas of both play and community.

The texts discussed in this section suggest more radically than participatory events that in various ways, playfulness is valid, sustainable, and subversive. Encouraging full immersion and community-building, and approaching play more flexibly than KidZania London, Camp Wildfire comes close but remains an organised, scheduled event that requires participants' initiative for sideways growth. Perhaps only in fiction do adults allow themselves to more thoroughly explore queer time through playfulness, and to imagine female play ethics and child-adult play communities. In these texts, play enhances and jollifies adulthood, and provides emotional survival for those who feel queer in their age category or society. Here, play is a means to support sideways growth in ways that are not inherently tied to, or restricted by, capitalism and financial restraints.

Conclusion: Possibilities of Play

While play may not (yet) be "our dominant way of knowing, doing and creating value" (Kane n.d., n.pag.), it is, especially if its definition includes playfulness, an increasingly important phenomenon, and perhaps the most socio-culturally acceptable way of growing sideways in twenty-first century Britain. That adults, not just children, are targeted as consumers of play indicates that adults are widely thought to be interested in playing, and that play is a conceptual area where the boundaries between childhood and adulthood blur more easily, even where play opportunities, especially for children such as KidZania London, are not particularly imaginative or interested in blurring age boundaries.

Play can facilitate sideways growth through queering ideas of upwards growth such as the notion that "growing up" entails: replacing play with work; discarding make-believe, toys and other 'immature' types of play; and becoming a productive worker and prolific consumer of products. Playing performatively with age categories, and adopting playfulness as a long-term attitude, human beings can pursue individual and creative meaning-making that explores alternative and generates novel ways of being and growing, jollify all aspects of life, move their bodies and minds in ways that may otherwise be unavailable due to age-specific expectations of behaviour and attitudes within the grand narrative of growth, and establish powerful play communities that transcend age categories. Play can be emotional survival, intellectual resistance, and physically rewarding "motor poetry", to borrow G. Stanley Hall's description of play (1904, p. 231). The variety of ways such play manifests and affects people shows the variety of forms and degrees sideways growth can take. Taking play seriously, for example by adopting playfulness as a life skill, can suspend age-related expectations and boundaries even beyond the temporal limits of specific play behaviours, exploring queer time.

Across the participatory play opportunities and fictional representations I have analysed, some reoccuring themes emerge. The examples from my primary material overwhelmingly correspond with the idea of adulthood as performative, echoing the twenty-first century neologism *adulting* which describes adult roles as discardable, and also advocate for embracing imagination and creating play communities where sideways growth rather than upwards growth can be supported as a viable option. Performative role play at KidZania and Camp Wildfire allows for conceiving of adulthood (and childhood) as malleable roles rather than inevitable states. Conventional ideas of adulthood (and childhood) are also challenged, altered, and made available for playing with through adult protagonists' playfulness in *Adult Life Skills* and *Miranda*; and through collective child-adult playfulness in *My Dad's a Birdman*, the *This Is England* cycle, and *Framed*. Whether

immersing themselves in partcipatory play opportunities; making masks, thumb-videos, or fruit friends; engaging in make-believe becoming-horse (galopping Miranda) or becoming-bird; nighttime singing in the streets or inventing art-inspired umbrella parades, play is used by children and adults to imagine novel ways of being and growing. Play also creates communities that can provide, or fight for, these novel ways of being and growing. These communities can be, for example, temporary and driven by market forces (KidZania London, Camp Wildfire), or long-term and personal (*My Dad's a Birdman*, *This Is England* cycle). The emergence of these themes across my primary material suggests that challenging conventional ideas of adulthood and embracing imagination and community are all significant themes around play in the zeitgeist of twenty-first century Britain. They are zeitgeist themes that shape the emerging structure of feeling around play, but also around growth.

Growing sideways through play has limitations as, for example, play can be capitalist training for the expected rather than subversive training for the unexpected. Nevertheless, play, in some forms, is a choice everybody can make, even when they cannot afford to pursue play in a legitimising context such as Camp Wildfire or might, as Anna in *Adult Life Skills*, be judged by others for it. Although play is being exploited commercially, as a cross-age market, and not all forms of play are equally available to everyone, play has strong potential for disturbing age boundaries, exploring alternative possibilities, and connecting people in unexpected ways. My discussion of play in this chapter also suggests that certain spaces further certain types of growth; for example, Camp Wildfire encourages adults to fully inhabit play by locating this endeavour in a child-free, somewhat secret, forest. In the following chapter on space, I exploring this notion through strategies of resisting, escaping, and evading spatial control.

Space

Resistance | Release

The opening line of British author L. P. Hartley's novel *The Go-Between* articulates a commonly assumed relationship between time and space: "The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there" (1953/1961, p. 9). This line, having been frequently quoted, has entered the British collective imagination and illuminates how space serves to demarcate childhood and adulthood in the grand narrative of growth. Uttered by the adult protagonist who, upon finding his childhood diary, faces memories of his childhood, Hartley's line employs space to separate age categories not merely in terms of chronological age (time passed), but also in terms of behaviour and attitudes (doing things differently). In common with conventional spatial metaphors such as *growing up* and growth as a *journey* upwards "towards a plateau of achieved maturity" (Hollindale, 1997/2001, p. 37), explored, and partly critiqued by, for example, Hollindale and Trites (2014, ch. 2), Hartley's line suggests that childhood and adulthood are (in) different spaces and that growing up entails irreversibly traversing the boundaries between them, for it is difficult to be in two spaces, or countries, at the same time. More specifically, Hartley invokes the idea of *territory* (a country), which, according to French historian Pierre Nora, is "by definition limited, therefore presupposing borders inside which power is exercised" (1984/2006, p. vii). Imagining the boundaries between childhood and adulthood as borders between countries indicates that there are rules and power structures deciding who belongs where and who can enter when, with whose permission. Growing up, then, is a regulated process, potentially privileging some people over others. Growing sideways, I will argue, subverts such power structures of upwards growth through unsettling conventional ideas of spaces.

The grand narrative of growth is *located*, or spatialised, not only metaphorically but also physically. In fact, the metaphor GROWTH IS UP is rooted in physical experience: "giv[ing] a concept to spatial orientation", it is an orientational metaphor, and orientational metaphors are based "in our physical and cultural experience" because they "arise from the fact that we have bodies [. . .] that [. . .] function as they do in our physical environment" (Lakoff, & Johnson, 1980, p. 14). Growing up implies increasing mastery over space: learning to sit *up*, walk *upright*, cycle, and drive are commonly celebrated as achievements in maturity. Furthermore, growing up means moving from places primarily intended for children, such as schools and playgrounds, to places primarily intended for adults, such as workplaces and nightclubs. The existence of age-specific spaces indicates that we understand time through space to the extent that, in addition to being, as Beauvais argues, "temporal other[s]" (2015, p. 44), children and adults are conceived of and treated as spatial others. Consequently, the grand narrative of upwards growth is chronotopic. Bakhtin coins *chronotope* – 'time space' – as a concept for "the inseparability of space and time (time as the fourth dimension of space)", and, while himself employing it to analyse literary genres, allows for its application to "other areas of culture" (1981/2002, p. 84). Time and space are linked chronotopically in the grand narrative of upwards growth, for, growing chronologically, physically, emotionally, and intellectually, children conventionally gain access to more places and the privileges, rights, and secrets these places represent, but lose some access to others, for example playgrounds. This even holds true for imaginary locations such as Barrie's Neverland: "The boys on the island vary, of course, in numbers, [. . .] when they seem to be growing up, which is against the rules, Peter thins them out" (1911/2008, p. 112). As such patterns of staggered spatial access socialise children by "slowly walk[ing] [them] up the staircase of adult information, one step at a time" (Meyrowitz, 1984, p. 26), regulating spatial access is a way of marshalling growth upwards along physical and metaphorical "corridors of convention" (Griffiths,

2006, p. 5). However, as I will demonstrate in this chapter, this spatial progression upwards is not always possible or successful, and space can work differently, for growing sideways, through movements that challenge spatial control, render certain spaces uncertain, and disrupt conventional patterns of spatial access.

That spatial progressions upwards can fail is reflected in Meadows's *This Is England* cycle (2006–2015). In contrast to the idea of upwards growth as inevitable and desirable, in Meadows's cycle, access to adult spaces is unavailable to the protagonists or, where access is available, adult spaces are undesirable. The protagonists are either unemployed without access to workplaces, uninterested in work, or unhappily employed. Adulthood, as I highlighted in Chapter One, resembles a prison, a restrictive place of containment and punishment, for Shaun. As discussed in Chapter One and Chapter Two, Woody's factory job schedules his time differently, isolating him from his friends, and determines his appearance in a way that compromises his sense of self. Moving out of their parents' places and into their first flat is an equally uneasy transition for Lol and Woody. Swarming with rats and maggots, the flat is so derelict that Lol considers conceding her spatial access: "I'd rather live with my mum" (S1E2, 07:13). When his relationship with Lol ends, Woody reverses his spatial progression by moving in with his parents, who monitor his comings and goings, to his despair: "Well, bloody hell. Come on, I'm twenty-five" (S2E2, 04:28). While unwilling or unable to enter adult spaces, the gang frequent childhood spaces. For example, Gadget, Shaun, and Milky return to their school canteen for "the nostalgia" of "having meals that we used to have when we were happy, when we were kids" (S3E1, 02:07). Spatial access affects their possibilities of growth: growing up is either impossible or leads to just another set of restrictive spaces. Instead, the gang develop unconventional models of growth by choosing alternative spaces and, as I demonstrate later in the chapter, using space differently. For them, failing to progress spatially upwards results in sideways growth.

I examine the relationship between space and growth in terms of a tension between restriction and liberation. Endeavours that keep people under control or within limits, I term *containment*. In turn, I refer to endeavours that challenge containment without eluding it as *resistance*, and those that escape containment as *release*. Growing sideways, I will argue, can manifest both within containment, through resistance, and as release from containment. To conceptualise space in relation to growing sideways, I draw on Michel de Certeau's notion of "spatial practices" (1984/1988, p. 110), which he defines as an example of "everyday practices, 'ways of operating' or doing things" (1984/1988, p. xi). Understanding spatial practices as the ways in which people interact with space allows for conceiving of space as unstable: "[s]pace occurs as the effect" of "the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function in a polyvalent unity", and, thus, space, "like the word when it is spoken, [. . .] is caught in the ambiguity of an actualization, [. . .] situated as the act of a present (or of a time), and modified by the transformations caused by successive contexts" (de Certeau, 1984/1988, p. 117). If space changes through idiosyncratic human interaction with it, spaces where containment is imposed can, for example, be altered through spatial practises that provide release. Space affects people, and vice versa. Destabilising space conceptually and physically in this manner opens up possibilities for destabilising ways in which the grand narrative of growth governs spaces. Proposing that sideways growth relies on fluid meanings also in a spatial sense, I investigate unstable spaces and spatial practices that make spaces unstable.

This chapter explores spaces and spatial practises of resistance and release in twenty-first century Britain to pinpoint ways of growing sideways. I argue that the grand narrative of growth is a narrative of containment and draw on observations of power and space by Foucault, Nikolajeva, Beauvais, and Tuan to examine how it operates spatially. Considering the implications of a wider culture of parental and governmental spatial control, for example through risk-averse parenting and surveillance technology, for

children and adults and their growth, I analyse captivity narratives around abduction and institutionalisation, such as Alexis Deacon's picturebook *Slow Loris* (2002), Kevin Brooks's young adult novel *The Bunker Diary* (2013), and Jenny Downham's children's novel *Unbecoming* (2015). I suggest that containment, if it blurs age boundaries, can in fact facilitate sideways growth and that resistance to containment in unfriendly spaces requires sideways movements and mindsets. Having established the severity and omnipresence of containment and some ways of resisting it, I build on work by Halberstam, Tuan, and Ahmed to investigate ideas of wilderness, wildness, and disorientation to examine how children and adults seek release from containment in Meadows's *This Is England* cycle (2006–2015), Almond's children's novel *Jackdaw Summer* (2008), Keith Gray's young adult novel *Ostrich Boys* (2008), Hughes's picturebook *Wild* (2013), and Kitson's novel for adults *Sal* (2018). I propose that wild spaces are uncertain spaces that can become homely queer spaces for sideways growth, and that built environments can be disorientated for wild sideways growth. Moving between public and private spaces in the first half of the chapter, I then examine wild spaces that become private spaces and public spaces that become both private and wild. In the process, I trace possibilities of growing sideways in resisting unfriendly spaces of containment and in finding release through other spaces or disorientating spatial practices.

Resistance

The grand narrative of growth is a narrative of containment. Metaphorically, and through its various age boundaries, it contains growth by allowing some kinds of emotional, physical, and intellectual development and movement as the 'right' way of being and growing but (dis-)missing others. Physically, the grand narrative of growth establishes

'right' places alongside 'right' times for growth. Imposing a pattern of conventional spatial progression upwards, the grand narrative of growth requires children and adults to be contained through particular spaces and spatial practices in order to uphold its aetonormative power structure. According to Foucault, space implicates power, for "[i]n the first instance, discipline proceeds from the distribution of individuals in space" (1975/1991, p. 141). I inspect examples of how aetonormative power structures affect the distribution of children and adults in space to identify spatial patterns of upwards growth that growing sideways challenges.

As discussed in the Introduction, the concept of *aetonormativity*, coined by Nikolajeva (2010) to describe unequal power relationships in children's literature and everyday life that favour adults over children, and developed by Beauvais (2012; 2015) to include possibilities of understanding children as powerful, describes an idea of "adult normativity", oppressing children until they "grow up and become oppressors themselves" (Nikolajeva, 2010, p. 8-9). Whereas pre-modern living arrangements featured less age-specific spatial differentiation, in Western societies, aetonormative power relationships manifest spatially on a large scale at least since the nineteenth century (Gillis, 2004, p. 319). The ways age-specific spaces and age-specific roles within spaces separate children and adults imply that adults are superior to children. Although some children temporarily do work experience in the former or sneak into the latter, workplaces and night clubs are exclusively intended for adults, suggesting that children are less responsible; intellectually, emotionally, and physically capable; or resilient to stress and intoxication than adults. Playgrounds, in turn, are traditionally exclusively intended for children, aligning with the conventional idea, explored in Chapter Three, that children need play to grow upwards and that adults, already grown up, have no need for play. In Britain, this separation is heightened by fences and signs. Instead of signage that declares play areas safe for children of certain chronological ages, which would not explicitly exclude adults, The Royal

Society for the Prevention of Accidents recommends a stricter wording: "A bald statement such as 'This area is to be used by children Under 8 only' is to be preferred" (n.d., n.pag.). Intended to prevent litigation if a playground accident involves a child whose chronological age, mental ability, and physical capability do not align conventionally, this wording prohibits adults from playing there. Instead, conventional adult playground roles comprise accompanying, supervising, or assisting children in their care. Adults without children, lingering or playing on playgrounds raise suspicions of immaturity at best and predatory behaviour at worst, especially if they are male. This imbalance relates to a gender bias in play, noted in Chapter Three. Female play, because it is conventionally more directly linked to domesticity and childcare, may be seen as less threatening to children than male play. Libraries and bookshops have separate areas for children and adults, implying that some books require experienced readers, with higher levels of literacy, emotional strength, and knowledge. Even within private homes, some areas, for example adults' bedrooms, tend to be out-of-bounds for children, and adults can use space to control children's behaviour ("Go to bed!"), or "ground" them as punishment. Although children and (some) adults access schools to similar extents, age-specific roles create an aetonormative hierarchy of knowledge, authority, and discipline within them: children primarily are students answering to adults, for example teachers, and administrative or maintenance staff. Adults control children's movements and behaviours by containing them in specific spaces, but they also have access to spaces designed for children, for instance, a fundamental adult presence marks libraries, playgrounds, and schools. As children and adults have different, aetonormatively shaped, relationships to space even in shared spaces, spaces that are genuinely communal across age boundaries are rare in twenty-first century Britain. Partly leisure-based and partly wild, beaches are spaces children and adults share more equitably. In one iconic example, Burningham's picturebook *Come Away from the Water, Shirley* (1977) represents the different and yet

simultaneous uses of that space by one child and two adult characters: the verso of each double-page spread depicts Shirley's parents knitting, reading, and uttering directions at their daughter such as "[c]areful where you're throwing those stones" (n.pag.), whereas the recto depicts Shirley having full-blown pirate adventures at sea. Both parent and child characters enjoy their leisure time at the beach in particular ways that can co-exist in this space even if their ideas of fun are incompatible. In the second half of the chapter, I will focus on wilderness as a space that, physically removed from social structures and built environments, can provide release from aetonormative power relationships. As built environments are predominantly planned and constructed by adults, they tend to suit adults and adults' ideas of children.

This aetonormative power dynamic, in which adults decide what spaces children can enter, and what spatial practises they can pursue there, initially is justified to protect and care for small children with, for example, limited abilities to move through or read space. Consequently, small children are dependent on adults to an extent that, as Tuan observes, severely restricts them: "An infant is unfree, and so are prisoners and the bedridden. They cannot, or have lost their ability to, move freely; they live in constricted spaces" (1997/2001, p. 52). That children are spatially contained by adults even as they become more physically and intellectually capable signals status differences. Tuan notes that "[s]patial location derives from position in society rather than vice versa" (1979, p. 409), and Meyrowitz argues that differences in status "would [. . .] begin to blur" were people not separated "into different social and informational worlds" (1984, p. 26). Asserting their difference in status, spatially separating children and adults legitimises the power imbalance between them. However, in some ways, children can move more freely. Children, especially if they are short and daring, can take shortcuts unavailable to adults and break some spatial etiquettes without serious consequences on the assumption that they do not yet know better. For example, children can push their way to the front of a crowd or

crawl between legs to leave it quickly. In some spaces, children may skip with less likelihood of being ridiculed than adults and, with the exception of Hart's sitcom character Miranda, adults rarely gallop. Spatially separating childhood and adulthood discourages adults from engaging in spatial practices or entering spaces associated with children. In indoor soft-play centres, for example, adults are often restricted to an observation area rather than invited to play. Being responsible for containing children also places pressure on adults. Strict ideas of age-specific spaces and spatial practices restrict the movements of both children and adults. As containing children can also contain adults, growing sideways offers forms of resistance and release for both.

Twenty-first century Britain is particularly and peculiarly invested in containing children and adults; based on an idea that public spaces especially are unsafe, parental and governmental efforts police space to an extraordinary extent in ways that, in fact, disrupt upwards growth. The abduction and murder of toddler James Bulger by two ten-year-old boys in Merseyside in 1993, which caused a "conceptual confusion" about what children are capable of (Jenks, 1996/2005, p. 88), fuelled fears about public spaces and had "profound spatial implications" for children (Jenks, 1996/2005, p. 88), for it was interpreted as the arrival of "a violent new world, where you couldn't trust your children with anyone, not even other children" (Morrison, 6 Feb. 2003, n.pag.). This sentiment presents a particular bout of adult anxiety in what Susan Hancock terms a long tradition of "a fear *for* and a fear *of* children" (2009, p. 3, emphasis in original), and its lasting impact is reflected in popular culture, such as Cassidy's young adult novel *Looking for JJ* (2004) about a ten-year-old who killed her friend. In a bid to protect children, also from accidents, twenty-first century Britain is "quite risk-averse": "children are heavily supervised and play indoors, in their gardens and in specially designed play spaces with safety surfaces" (Whitebread, Basilio, Kuvalja, & Vermaare, 2012, p. 12). A tendency towards risk-averse parenting, which reduces children's spatial access and limits their spatial practices to

increase their safety, contributes to a decrease in children's home range, the area they are allowed to roam unsupervised. Between 1971 and 1990, the percentage of seven- and eight-year-olds that were allowed to go to school on their own dropped from 80 to 9 per cent (Hillman, Adams, & Whitelegg, 1990, p. 106), and, in twenty-first century Britain, Stephen Moss's "Natural Childhood" report for the National Trust cites evidence that two out of three ten-year-olds do not enter shops or parks by themselves and asks if children have become "prisoners in their own homes" (2012, p. 5). Similar concerns are voiced in the gravely titled tabloid article "How Children Lost the Right to Roam in Four Generations" (Derbyshire, 15 Jun. 2007, n.pag.), David Bond's BBC documentary *Project Wild Thing* (2018), which also considers children's preoccupation with screen-based indoor activities as a cause of shrinking home ranges and is particularly worried about children's access to wild spaces, and by psychologist Tanya Byron, who argues that containing children affects their emotional growth because it deprives them of the "risks that [they] need to develop into confident and capable human beings" (qtd. in Garner, 18 Jan. 2013, n.pag.). Alongside affecting children's physical and mental health, their diminished home range can lead to a "lack of natural literacy" (Macfarlane, 30 Sept. 2017, n.pag.) and, perhaps, an adulthood disengaged from nature and environmental concerns. As childhood is being called into question as a conceptual category, adults contain children more strictly in order to reaffirm its boundaries but, in the process, stifle children's upwards growth. If both childhood and, as I noted via *This Is England '86* in Chapter One, adulthood are perceived as prisons, growing sideways appeals to children and adults by disassociating from these age categories.

On a governmental level, concerns about unsafe spaces inform efforts to contain potentially harmful people and behaviours through controlling space via legislation and technology. In the wake of the Bulger case, fears of children making public spaces unsafe manifest through the introduction of the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act, which lowered the

chronological age of criminal responsibility to ten (Sect. 34; cf. L. Sainsbury, 2013, pp. 48-50), and allowed adults to police children's spatial practices widely through local child curfews and Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (see Burney, 2008). In order to reduce crime and render public spaces safer, the government also installed closed circuit television (CCTV) in every major town centre in the mid-1990s (Squires, 2008, p. 4). At the launch of the Liverpool City Centre CCTV Scheme in 1995, then Home Office Minister David Maclean commented: "This is a friendly eye in the sky. There is nothing sinister about it and the innocent have nothing to fear. It will put criminals on the run and evidence will be clear to see" (qtd. in Goold, 2004, p. 26). Although little sounds more sinister than a reassurance that "[t]here is nothing sinister" and the move towards mass surveillance of public space occurred "on the basis of virtually no reliable evidence of effectiveness" (Squires, 2008, p. 4, cf. pp. 41, 21), Britain, within under ten years, "became the most extensive user of CCTV in the world" (Goold, 2004, p. 7) with an unparalleled, "massive public investment in surveillance technology" (Squires, 2008, p. 4). Between 2012 and 2015, the number of surveillance cameras increased by seventy-two per cent in London (Draper, 2018, p. 34), and, in 2018, Britain remains exceptional, for surveillance camera commissioner Tony Porter notes "an appetite in the U.K. for surveillance" that he "ha[s]n't seen anywhere else in the world" (qtd. in Draper, 2018, p. 48). This expansive use of CCTV contributes to a culture of surveillance wherein people's spatial practices are recorded, evaluated, and, if they are aware and wary of being watched, potentially altered. Moreover, some CCTV, for example in nurseries and schools, is directed specifically at children. Schools install CCTV, even in bathrooms and changing rooms, to "ensure everyone's safety", and prevent disorderly behaviour and damage to school buildings (Weale, 2 Nov. 2017, n.pag.). Thereby, as Big Brother Watch's report on the extensive usage of CCTV in schools asserts, they "acclimatis[e] children to an environment where surveillance is the norm" (2012, p. 4-5). That children and adults are widely surveilled

indicates that they are perceived as transgressing socially acceptable boundaries of behaviour to the extent that such boundaries need to be monitored closely. If neither children nor adults are trusted to behave appropriately, they are rendered more alike than the grand narrative of upwards growth conventionally allows. Moreover, if growing up into adulthood does not promise an escape from the containment of surveillance, it becomes less desirable.

This wider culture of spatial control and surveillance by parents and governmental authorities not only implies a concern that spaces are unsafe but also itself creates unfriendly spaces, where people are restricted and monitored. Growing sideways can counter this culture through endeavours to exist and act autonomously and privately, defying (un)friendly eyes in the sky. Such resistance to containment involves exposing spaces as unfriendly, refusing to adopt authority-imposed spatial practices, and asserting agency. I examine captivity narratives whose heightened representations of unfriendly spaces specifically created to contain individuals expose how spatial boundaries operate and suggest possibilities of resisting containment through sideways growth, even where sideways growth is unable to provide escape.

Sheets, Mindsets, and Nocturnal Activities: Resisting Unfriendly Spaces

In this subsection, I trace ways of resisting containment that indicate sideways growth in Brooks's *The Bunker Diary*, Downham's *Unbecoming*, and Deacon's *Slow Loris*. These narratives explore captivity as a result of abduction or institutionalisation through a bunker, a nursing home, and a zoo, respectively. Contextualising each narrative through other representations of these types of captivity, I examine resistance in relation to a tension between perceiving spaces of containment as unfriendly, even hostile, and friendly, or homely.

Brooks's *The Bunker Diary* (2013) addresses Britain's investment in CCTV by containing child and adult characters in a situation of constant surveillance. The novel consists of diary entries written by sixteen-year-old Linus after having been kidnapped and locked in an underground bunker by a middle-aged man. His diary describes the nine-year-old girl Jenny and four adults who arrive subsequently, his attempts at escape, and the deaths of the other occupants, and ends mid-sentence, suggesting that Linus, too, has died. Considering this ending, it is not surprising that many publishers found the manuscript too bleak and that winning the Carnegie Medal in 2014 prompted a controversy about whether or not *The Bunker Diary* is "vile and dangerous" and, therefore, inappropriate for teenagers (Bradbury, 24 Jun. 2014, n.pag.). Brooks argues that "children – and teens in particular – don't need to be cossetted [sic] with artificial hope that there will always be a happy ending" and that providing such hope is "patronising" (qtd. in Chilton, 23 Jun. 2014, n.pag.). While itself being debated as a (reading) space that children should be excluded from for their (emotional) safety, *The Bunker Diary* explores the effects of surveilled containment on children and adults' growth, implying that, as I noted in Chapter Two, certain spaces encourage (or discourage) certain kinds of growth. Similar explorations of space and growth as a dialectical relationship also emerge in other twenty-first century cultural representations of abductions, suggesting a wider interest in both this relationship and this type of captivity. The protagonist of Marnie Dickens's television mini-series *Thirteen* (2016), Ivy Moxam, abducted at the chronological age of thirteen and escaping at the chronological age of twenty-six, has 'grown up' – at the very least legally, chronologically, and physically – in the 'wrong' spaces. Consequently, as her abductor Mark White observes, Ivy "can't ever really be a part of out there" and "will always be different" (E5, 29:25). Having being denied a conventional spatial progression upwards, Ivy has not grown up in a way that is legible in wider society – her growth is "different". Hence, adults, from police officers to her parents, see twenty-six-year-old Ivy as not

having grown up and, instead, as incompetent and needing containment. Representations of 'different' growth as a result of 'different' spaces also feature in abduction narratives such as Canadian Emma Donoghue's novel for adults *Room* (2010) and American Tina Fey's television series *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* (2015–present). These narratives highlight that containment can complicate conventional ideas and power structures around childhood and adulthood, and thereby, shift established boundaries between them. Brooks's novel is particularly interesting because its protagonists, unlike Dickens's, Donoghue's and Fey's, seem unable to escape the unfriendly space their abductor has placed them in.

The bunker in Brooks's text is a restrictive space ambiguously oscillating between security and threat. A window-less "low-ceilinged rectangular building made entirely out of whitewashed concrete" (2013, p. 1), it limits movement and thinking space. These restrictions, once protective, have become malign: the bunker has been re-purposed from a nuclear war shelter to a prison. None of the occupants enter voluntarily or, it is implied, leave alive. Alongside controlling the exit, a lift, the abductor contains the occupants through surveillance – the bunker has been fitted with cameras and microphones throughout. As in British society more widely, surveillance is omnipresent, although its ideological purpose is unclear. "The Man Upstairs" (p. 144) who, instead of having a specific name, is described with an expression (*the Man*) commonly used for authority figures, serves as a metonym for governmental bodies assuming a position of omniscience. Hence, a vague figure of authority has invested in an extraordinary amount of surveillance technology, without giving those under surveillance a choice or an explanation. Attempts to destroy cameras result in water and toxic gas being dispensed through grilles in the ceiling as punishment (p. 27), suggesting that this space is not only unfriendly but hostile and that not wanting to be watched equals having something to hide. Limiting and monitoring the movements of its occupants, the bunker also restricts growth. Neither Jenny nor Linus have access to spaces representing landmarks of linear upwards growth, such as

school, university, their first independent accommodation, or workplaces. The adult occupants similarly lack access to chrononormativity, for example climbing the property ladder and retiring. Such upwards growth is unattainable rather than inevitable. Furthermore, the adult characters, equally trapped in the bunker, have no advantage in spatial access, spatial authority, or spatial knowledge over the child characters. The aetonormative hierarchy of knowledge is suspended, "the staircase of adult information" (Meyrowitz, 1984, p. 26) is closed, and neither child nor adult characters can gather any useful data on the abductor. Since the abductor tampers with the clock, growth cannot be measured chronologically either: "How many days have I lost? Or gained? [. . .] The time is now. That's all there is to it" (K. Brooks, 2013, p. 210). Being in a shared space of containment that treats children and adults alike queers the occupants' growth: it connects childhood and adulthood and disturbs linear time. For the occupants, thinking in terms of the grand narrative of upwards growth becomes irrelevant – the mystery around the reasons and outcome of their captivity, and their inability to progress, or track their progress, upwards render attempts to conform to the grand narrative pointless. Imposing upwards as a direction of growth is futile in the bunker. Reading Brooks's text as a metaphor for life more generally, where individuals are not either in control of all their circumstances, also suggests that the strict, linear trajectories expected in upwards growth are futile goals even outside of brick-and-mortar bunkers. Growing sideways can provide resistance both outside and within such bunkers.

Where the occupants resist surveilled containment, they access sideways growth. As the lift only transports them down into the bunker but not upwards, they are orientated sideways rather than up. Jenny and Linus, in this shared space, are as or more competent than the adult characters, even as they are underestimated by each other and by them. Reflecting aetonormative ideas of children as less capable than adults and of some places as less appropriate for children, Linus is shocked by nine-year-old Jenny's arrival: "When

you see an adult in trouble you still feel bad, but not half as bad as when you see a child in trouble. It's the helplessness" (p. 37). To protect her, Linus contains Jenny through ignorance and hope. He initially keeps quiet about the surveillance technology to avoid "frighten[ing] her" (p. 27), and provides what Brooks shuns, an artificial hope of a happy ending, when she asks what is going to happen to them: "'Nothing,' I lied. 'We're going to be all right.'" (p. 217). Linus himself is underestimated by adult occupants because of his chronological age: "'What do you know anyway?' she [Anja] sneered. 'How old are you?'" (p. 48). However, whereas the captured adults are easily distracted from escape plans and either mentally weak – Anja and Bird are greedy and Fred is addicted to heroin (p. 107) – or physically weak – Russell is dying of a brain tumor (p. 118) – Linus and Jenny use the available space deviantly and are resilient. Linus maps the bunker (p. 1), most actively tries to escape, and introduces a sheet as a tool to resist surveillance. As a result, the abductor's CCTV experiment, like Britain's, is not entirely effective. The occupants can at least partially evade surveillance by hiding under a sheet in the bathroom (p. 52). Thus, they create a movable blind spot that allows them some privacy. Linus resists by continuing to analyse and attempting to alter his containment. In turn, Jenny, suggesting that "[s]ome people [. . .] won't give you anything unless you ask" (p. 22), initiates the system of leaving notes in the lift to communicate with the abductor. Thus, she acquires sensible food such as bread, cheese, and tea, and also hygiene articles (p. 23) and cleaning supplies (p. 106), which render the hostile space friendlier: somewhat nourishing and physically bearable for longer. Jenny alone realises which escape idea is worth pursuing (p. 86), and pragmatically proposes drawing lots when they are unable to decide who should test their food for poison (p. 148). Furthermore, she is emotionally resilient: unlike Linus, Jenny is not afraid of the dark (p. 24) and, towards the end, Jenny's eyes are "[a]s bright as the day she arrived" whereas everyone else has "dead eyes" (p. 178). Jenny, chronologically the youngest and female, is the most influential and resilient occupant,

resisting containment by negotiating its terms, making it more comfortable, and maintaining her focus. The adult characters, instead of assuming responsibility for resolving the situation and for taking care of the child characters, abandon these duties of upwards growth in favour of resigning themselves to containment and gratifying whatever pleasures they still have access to – the absoluteness of their containment allows them to abdicate responsibilities and grow sideways selfishly. The occupants' resistance to containment takes different forms: Linus and Jenny take responsibility and assert agency where they should be utterly helpless, and the adult occupants find pleasure where they should have none. *The Bunker Diary* implies that containment in a heightened form across age categories, as in the wider British culture of surveillance, discards age-based spatial differentiations and, thereby, undermines upwards growth – it becomes undesirable and unattainable. In turn, sideways growth, even if unable to secure release, provides an attainable alternative. It remains an option when other options become unavailable.

Less intentionally hostile spaces than Brooks's bunker, nursing homes contain adults who, much like children of risk-averse parents, are deemed to have limited spatial and intellectual abilities which require their containment in a space that curtails their independence. Although they, as nursing *homes*, tend to aim to create homely spaces, they can also be unfriendly spaces, where, for example, the residents' nutrition, exercise, bed times, visiting hours, and clothing, may be subject to surveillance and control by staff. Walliams's children's novel *Grandpa's Great Escape* (2015) exemplifies, and exaggerates, the idea of nursing homes as unfriendly spaces by describing the nursing home Twilight Towers as "look[ing] [. . .] like a prison" because it is "a converted Victorian lunatic asylum" with barred windows and "observation towers", including searchlights (2015, pp. 220-221). Its residents are, to return to Foucault's term from Chapter Two, rendered docile bodies, for they are expected to obey, be silent, take sleeping pills that allow them less than one waking hour, and wear night clothes also during the day (pp. 268-269, cf. p. 262) –

they are asleep and inactive for the convenience of the staff who, incidentally, run the home for exploitative reasons, to forge the residents' wills and gain access to their wealth. Resistance, and release, require recognising this oppressive structure, which Jack's grandfather's particular mindset enables him to do. Primed to be suspicious by his war-time experience, Jack's grandfather interprets the nursing home as a "prisoner-of-war-camp" (p. 252) and, therefore, he is inclined to resist its patterns of oppression, for example by hiding the sleeping pills in his moustache instead of swallowing them (p. 253). Awake and attentive, instead of docile, he plans his escape. His ability to resist containment speaks to his sideways growth, for he demonstrates more intellectual and physical dexterity than staff expect of elderly adults like him. Downham's children's novel *Unbecoming* (2015) presents a more nuanced negotiation of resistance to nursing homes and other forms of containment, through a mindset. As doctors and a social worker declare "ancient" (2015, p. 3) Mary to be "too vulnerable" (p. 4) to live independently, she moves in with her estranged daughter Caroline who immediately begins searching for a nursing home space for Mary (p. 15). Meanwhile, Caroline's flat serves as a homely but unfriendly space of containment – Mary's "world g[ets] smaller", for she is suspected of causing chaos, not trusted to navigate traffic safely, and her spatial independence inconveniences others by worrying them or requiring them to chase her (p. 38). Although Mary fails to locate herself or recognise her own daughter, she recognises her situation as containment and, hence, is able to register her resistance. While Mary "didn't know where she was", she realises that she "wasn't at home and that was reason enough to be wary" (p. 10). Warily, then, she notes that "this woman" (Caroline) treats her "as if" she "was in charge" and Mary "a child" (p. 229) and, when Caroline locks the front door to prevent a night-time walk, Mary voices her resistance by naming her situation as "*a jail*" (p. 63, emphasis in original). Mary's granddaughter Katie, to an extent herself contained by her risk-averse mother Caroline, sympathises with Mary, whom she describes as "trapped in the flat with

no choice about anything" (p. 73). Furthermore, staring at Mary, who stares back, reminds Katie "of zoos and how weird it was when a caged animal came up close and studied you as intently as you were studying them" (p. 19). While Katie compares Mary's containment to that of zoo animals, she also links captivity and agency, suggesting that awareness can constitute resistance.

The nursing home Mary eventually is placed in is, if less absurdly so than that in Walliams's text, a space of captivity for docile bodies. It is presented as a restrictive space of "safety and closed doors and windows and regulated meal times and people being the same every day and no surprises at all" (p. 269). A closed, regulated and predictable place, the nursing home excludes adult residents from the spatial privileges of adulthood in the grand narrative of growth and is an unfriendly space for chaotic and unpredictable sideways growth. Its very architecture discourages meaningful activity: "'A lot of our residents like to walk so a looped corridor provides that opportunity in a safe environment'" (p. 270). Concerns of safety, and convenience, restrict residents' spatial practices: they are placated by being allowed to walk but kept in a repetitive loop that prioritises monotone over diverse (enriching) experiences. Unsurprisingly, the residents are either "asleep, their heads lolling", or so unresponsive that they resemble "shapeless bags rather than people" (p. 272). However, Mary resists this closed, regulated, predictable, and looped space. She insists on daily walks to the nearby sea, which exposes her to changeable environments, and notices where staff hide their cigarettes (p. 437) and, it is implied, steals them. Hence, she finds ways of accessing pleasures otherwise denied in this unfriendly space. Furthermore, her grandchildren encourage her to resist through nocturnal activities. Katie suggests Mary "'stay awake all night, [. . .] wait until everyone's asleep and [. . .] watch a movie in the TV room and steal cakes from the kitchen'" and Chris proposes Mary "'ha[s] a party'" (pp. 436-437). These activities circumvent the rules of the institution in the pursuit of delight and invites other residents into this endeavour to claim

patches of unfriendly, isolating space as welcoming, homely, and sociable. Katie resolves to give Mary "[h]undreds of [. . .] resistant, demanding ideas. Indecorous and unseemly ideas" (p. 436), implying that ideas themselves, whether or not they are executed, can offer intellectual and emotional resistance to containment. Moreover, Katie promises Mary will have "'more adventures'" every day, for she is "'a work in progress'", a diagnosis at which Mary "jig[s] her feet in delight" (p. 437). Even in a nursing home, Katie hopes, Mary can access new experiences – which Katie's word choice aligns with evocations of adventure that indicate sideways growth, such as Camp Wildfire and Anna's grandmother's advice in *Adult Life Skills*, discussed in Chapter Three – because of her unpredictable, in-progress identity. This identity is the overarching, titular concept of the novel, *unbecoming*.

Unbecoming is developed as a concept throughout the novel by combining children's and adults' experiences of various forms of containment. As a girl, Mary frequently "climb[s] out [her] bedroom window and down the drainpipe to go dancing", which her father disapproves of, and attempts to prevent by ordering her to stay indoors, because it is "unbecoming for a young lady to enjoy so much [male] attention" (p. 21). When her father is in a more favourable mood, he links Mary's unbecoming behaviour to having "'the fire'" and being "'trouble'" (p. 52), implying a passionate drive to explore and experiment that may be invigorating or dangerous. Mary is unbecoming in terms of stereotypical gender roles also in other ways: she is perceived as being "too bold, too opinionated", and incapable of domestic tasks, restraint, and motherly instinct (p. 85). As an adult, Mary maintains her unseemly, deviant trait of unbecoming, which expands beyond gender. When a doctor asks Mary the names for everyday objects to test her intellectual ability and linguistic knowledge, she replies imaginatively: a "stapler became a snatcher" and "a ruler was a sovereign" (p. 98). As Katie observes, Mary "wasn't wrong" but "you needed to look sideways at her answers to see the truth" (p. 98). Mary's sideways perspective allows her to navigate everyday life without being contained by missing

vocabulary and, in fact, enriches Katie's experience. For example, Katie delights in Mary's "clever" terms (p. 98) and finds that "[e]veryday things seemed special viewed through Mary's eyes" (p. 99). Furthermore, Mary is prone to "start singing or stuff her pockets with sugar cubes or ask the couple on the next table if she might finish the pizza they'd clearly abandoned" (p. 122). Unbecoming, then, involves resisting social etiquette beyond gender norms. Mary's version of unbecoming inspires Katie to be unbecoming herself. Her grandmother "see[s] [Katie's] fire" (p. 230) and teaches her to "[r]isk your heart and make things HAPPEN" (p. 130). Katie gains "new confidence" (p. 163), both in terms of demanding spatial independence from her risk-averse mother (pp. 199, 409) and openly pursuing her crush on a girl in spite of her previous experience of being "left out, talked about and marginalized" (p. 416) at school when she deviated from the sexual norm. Alongside behaving in an unbecoming way, like Mary, Katie enacts her unbecoming spatially when she draws a rainbow in chalk on a public pavement to increase visibility for queer sexual orientations and signal "'[h]ope and pride and diversity'" (p. 418), rendering this public space friendlier for those who do not conform to mainstream identities. In the process, Katie declares her new self-concept to her crush: "I AM UNBECOMING" (p. 416). Katie's subsequent explanation of unbecoming as being "'[a] work in progress'" (p. 418) allows her to make her own choices, deviate, fail, unravel, and experiment. Noting that "everyone" (p. 437) can be a work in progress, Katie conceptualises human beings, irrespective of age, as neither becomings nor beings (cf. Lee, 2001, p. 5), but as capable of sideways growth away from such limiting categories. Resistance, in Downham's novel, as in Walliams's, foremost is a mindset. However, in Downham's novel, it is a widely accessible mindset of giving yourself permission to be in flux that does not depend on past experiences such as the grandfather's war-time training in Walliams's text. Furthermore, this mindset transcends age categories and is beneficial across different types of containment. Mary and Katie give each other resistant ideas, encouraging each other to

grow sideways even as they are physically (nursing home) or metaphorically (heteronormativity) contained. Mindsets can affect growth, as I proposed via research by Langer (2009) in Chapter One, and also space.

Developing the link of elderly, contained adults with animals in captivity, glimpsed in *Unbecoming*, the grandfather in Morag Hood's picturebook *When Grandpa Was a Penguin* (2017), with a knowing wink to the reader, institutionalises himself into a zoo instead of a nursing home, first impersonating a penguin, then a flamingo. Zoos, like nursing homes, have routines and visiting hours, and negotiate safety and danger through how they contain their residents. While nursing homes are concerned about the safety of their residents and aim to prevent dangers they might place themselves in, zoos are also concerned about the safety of their visitors and the dangers animals pose to them, for they negotiate captivity by creating spaces that are both homely and a wild. Zoo enclosures seek to approximate the animals residents' wild habitats, and, therefore, feel homely for them, while also bringing wild animals into a non-wild, homely, context for the entertainment and education of human visitors. Representations of zoos that challenge this institution's spatial boundaries of containment include Mary Poppins's birthday party at the zoo, where animals are in charge and celebrate with humans (Travers, 1934/1998, ch. 10), Babette Cole's picturebook *Tarzanna!* (1991), in which animals escape from a zoo and humans from a city to live together in a jungle, and Anthony Browne's picturebook *Zoo* (1992), which depicts the zoo from the perspective of caged animals, effectively placing human visitors behind bars. Deacon's picturebook *Slow Loris* (2002) challenges spatial boundaries of containment in a zoo setting in a way that champions sideways growth.

The titular protagonist is a slow loris who, tellingly, is called "Slow Loris" by "everyone" although that "[i]sn't his real name" (2002, n.pag.). His lack of a proper name characterises the zoo as a space where his individuality is not prioritised. The zoo itself, and its staff, are depicted in stark black lines and muted colours – muddy browns, greys,

and greens – that evoke prisons and, through the staff's uniforms, the military, both contexts of strict behavioural rules and limited spatial mobility. This depiction of the zoo evokes bleak containment rather than a vibrant space of leisure or wildlife. Unsurprisingly, Loris "didn't care for [the zoo] much." He resists his captivity by only presenting one part of his personality to the staff and the visitors, his slow side: "It took Loris ten minutes to eat a satsuma . . . twenty minutes to get from one end of his branch to the other . . . and an hour to scratch his bottom. Most of the time though he just hung around, sleeping." As a result, the visitors and the other captive animals "thought Loris was boring". However, Loris has "a secret life" of nocturnal activities, much like Katie envisions for Mary in *Unbecoming*. At night, when staff and visitors are absent and other animals are "sound asleep", Loris "did things . . . FAST . . . until he was so tired he couldn't do another thing". As Loris is depicted climbing trees, dressing up in a hat and tie, and doing "noisy things" such as playing the drums, his secret life, again like Mary's nocturnal activities, revolves around pleasure and, bearing in mind the connotations of dressing up from Chapter Two and Three, imaginative play that allows him to transcend the identity category (caged animal on show for humans) imposed by his space of containment. In the subsequent scenes, the other animals realise that Loris "wasn't boring at all" but "really wild" – here, *wild* suggests that Loris thinks outside the box of his zoo cage just as the pages of the picturbook unfold during these scenes. Accompanied by bright specks of colour floating across the double-page spread like celebratory confetti, they join Loris, dressing up in hats, dancing, and making music "until they were all so tired, not one of them could do another thing". They collectively exhaust themselves having fun not sanctioned by the zoo. The animals share a space instead of being separated by cages, resisting the containment of who they are supposed to be and how they are supposed to behave in unsurveilled moments. As a result of their nocturnal activity, "all the animals were slow" and judged "'[b]oring'" the next day but "didn't care, now they had a secret too". Deacon's

picturebook implies that containment can be resisted by refusals to perform as expected, and by cultivating a secret life, where other performances are possible. Being slow is a result of, and a cover for, the animals' resistance.[22] Their resistance aligns with Nelson Mandela's prison experience, recounted by fellow prisoner Walter Sisulu: "The prison authorities would rush us . . . 'Hardloop!' That means run. One day [. . .] it was Nelson who said: 'Comrades let's be slower than ever'" (qtd. in Wooldridge, 11 Dec. 2013, n.pag.). Pace can be political, and an accessible option of resistance where release is unattainable. In Deacon's picturebook, the animals are supposed to perform for, and entertain, visitors during the day. As visitors' interest decreases the slower and more passive the animals are, the animals are fascinating only if they are fast. Instead, the animals perform for themselves at night and sleep during the day. They access these two modes of being, slow and fast, to establish inner freedom and take advantage of unsurveilled moments by creating a friendly space for an idiosyncratic homeliness across species. Growing sideways, here, involves embracing different paces and performances. Although the animals do not escape the zoo, they resist the purpose of this institution, potentially rendering it less profitable and appealing for their captors, and increase their quality of life in a way that redresses power imbalances between captives and captors.

In Brooks's, Downham's and Deacon's captivity narratives, the protagonists resist their unfriendly spaces of containment in various ways. Their resistance illuminates the ambiguity of their spaces of containment as both restrictive and homely. For example, as Linus settles into a routine, the bunker becomes more of a home than his parental home, school, and the streets have been previously: "stuck in the depths of this cold white bunker", he "finally know[s] how it feels to belong somewhere" (K. Brooks, 2013, p. 229). Echoing the spatial metaphor *locked in*, which can refer to a person involuntarily locked in

[22] In other contexts, being slow can itself be an exploration of other ways of being and growing, as suggested in the slow-motion trailer for *This Is England '86*, which I analysed in Chapter One, and by movements such as slow parenting, slow food, slow living, slow media, slow travel, slow education, and slow scholarship.

a space or their own body (*locked-in syndrome*), and to a possession locked in a safe for protection, Linus feels both imprisoned and secure in the bunker that restricts his movements and outside stimulants to an extent that approximates being locked in his body, curtailing his options of physical, emotional, and intellectual growth. Feeling at home in a place of extreme containment, a bunker, or presenting containment as homely, in nursing homes and zoos, questions ideas of home in general. Adults often view home (especially their childhood homes) nostalgically; for example, Gaston Bachelard describes the home as "the human being's first world", so comforting that "always, in our daydreams, the house is a large cradle" (1964/1994, p. 7). Yet, for children, home traditionally is also where their spatial practices are tightly controlled by adults. Containment can be homely, and obscured through familiarity. This holds true for other types of containment. For example, risk-averse parenting and surveillance – which monitor people in a bid for safety – and upwards growth – which contains people in certain life trajectories, expectations, and within bodily, vestimentary, behavioural, attitudinal, and spatial boundaries – can become homely through being omnipresent, routine, and habitual environments, and may feel homely even as they restrict individuals. If containment is routine and familiar, it requires effort, and sideways glances, to notice its patterns and resist it. Caroline's flat is a home and yet, as Mary notices because she is "wary" (p. 10), also a "*jail*" (Downham, 2015, p. 63, emphasis in original). Similarly, the nursing home, intended to be a homely space, contains its residents, as Katie realises, in an unfriendly space and can, through Mary's resistance, become homely in a different way that accommodates unpredictability and experimentation and, by extension, sideways growth. In turn, Loris recognises the patterns of containment in the zoo as bleak rather than homely and resists by creating his own nocturnal homeliness. Resistance can render unfriendly spaces homely and it can also help individuals maintain their sense of self. For example, Jenny retains her "bright" eyes (K. Brooks, 2013, p. 179), Mary continues to be unbecoming, and Loris maintains his ability to

move fast for pleasure. These forms of resistance have varying implications for growth. In *The Bunker Diary*, which presents the most hostile space out of these three texts, growing sideways is the only available option of growth but happens under duress and, ultimately, does not seem to secure survival or escape. *Unbecoming* offers a concept of understanding growth that, while it fails to prevent Mary's containment, allows for resistance and is sideways in its fluidity and because it works across age categories. *Slow Loris* most defiantly suggests sideways growth as resistance to containment by proposing a secret life that can be an individual and a collective pursuit. In these texts, the protagonists resist containment by responding to the constraints of their respective spaces differently. They find resilience and pleasure in growing sideways, enabling them to sustain their sense of self even in containment. In the next section, I will focus on growing sideways in terms of release from containment through representations of protagonists who escape into another space or fundamentally alter spaces.

Release

Children and adults may resist physical containment that renders upwards growth unattainable or undesirable through sideways moves even if they are unable to escape it, or, and this is the focus of this section, they may use such unexpected movement to achieve release from metaphorical and physical containment in ways that facilitate sideways growth. For adults, release from being contained by the grand narrative of growth can mean pursuing spatial practises associated with childhood or entering particular adult-only spaces. In a society where adults are constantly responsible for containing children, spaces without children, for example childfree hotels and adult-only events such as Camp Wildfire, provide release from this restricting role, perhaps even "a space for adult

catharsis" (Giroux, 2016/2017, p.127). Suspending aetonormative hierachies by removing the age category of children from a specific space, these spaces release adults from surveilling and controlling children, and from performing onstage adulthood for them. Adult-only spaces also allow adults to entertain the idea of living without (raising) children, which can constitute sideways growth. Yet, these spaces are also coercive structures, excluding children, and defining both children and adults in certain ways. Adventure playgrounds provide similar release to children, for, as researcher and adventure playground worker Harry Shier observes in 1984, no other space allowed children to "build, or dig, or paint the walls, or set fire to things, without interfering with the needs of the adult world, and thus finding their activities labelled anti-social and themselves, troublemakers" (1984, p. 3). Adventure playgrounds, offering "an area [. . .] set aside for children" (Shier, 1984, p.2) and their spatial practises with limited adult interference, temporarily release children from adult domination of space and spatial practices, but also reinforce aetonormative hierarchies and spatial divisions. They contain spatial practices adults otherwise disapprove of inside a specific, fenced-in space and even within this space, children are restricted and surveilled, if minimally, by adult playworkers.[23] As age-specific spaces that suspend responsibilities (child-free adult spaces) or extend privileges (adventure playgrounds) are temporarily and spatially limited, they only offer limited release.

In this section, I examine more flexible ways of defying aetonormative spaces and spatial practices than separating space along faultlines of age. If spaces of containment are characterised by an aetonormative hierarchical order and certain, fixed spatial boundaries, then release requires chaotic and uncertain spaces. To conceptualise release as escaping fixed definitions and boundaries through spatial practices, I focus on ideas of wilderness, wildness, and disorientation as manoeuvres that queer the grand narrative of growth. For

[23] In fact, adventure playgrounds were introduced to Britain in the 1950s partly to "ke[ep] even the roughest and toughest children happily engaged in activities which kept them out of mischief" (Shiers, 1984, p. 4)

this purpose, I build on two key spatial metaphors by queer theorists Halberstam and Ahmed. Drawing on Halberstam's notion of *the wild*, in relation to Tuan's idea of alien space, I examine representations of wilderness as release in Hughes's picturebook *Wild*, Almond's children's novel *Jackdaw Summer*, and Gray's young adult novel *Ostrich Boys*. Developing Ahmed's concept of *disorientation*, I explore release as wild, or queer, spatial practices in Kitson's novel for adults *Sal* and Meadows's *This Is England* cycle.

Roaming Wild Spaces

Watching David Attenborough's wildlife documentaries, which are widely celebrated but have been criticised as "tranquilising television, a form of social calming" for "armchair travellers" (Street-Porter, 6 Apr. 2018, n.pag.), seems to be a shared cultural escape from the confines of everyday life in Britain. However, wilderness, and wildness, can do more than educate and entertain. Regarding the term *queer* as "exhausted [. . .] critically and conceptually", Halberstam proposes the category *the wild*:

> *The wild* is [. . .] unpredictability, chance, that you don't know what your child will be like when they grow up, just as you don't know what profession they'll have. You probably shouldn't know what form their social intimacies will take, [. . .] the idea that we already know in advance exactly how their life will play out [. . .] tames the wild potential of human existence and human complexity. So the question asked by that category *the wild* is whether we can return human life forms not simply to a more eco-friendly form of co-existence with other life forms on the planet but also reproduce the terms under which unpredictability can thrive. (5 Sept. 2014, 00:14:09-00:15:10)

While I continue to find *queer* useful to explore possibilities beyond thinking in binaries and categories, Halberstam's idea of dethroning universal, prescriptive, chrononormative trajectories in favour of idiosyncratic, "wild" unpredictability and choice is significant

because it locates queer experiences in wilderness both metaphorically, as growing wildly rather than upwards, and literally, by suggesting an ecocritical dimension to queer growth. Woody's conviction that his father was "a wild man" (S1E1, 30:26) before he followed the conventional trajectory of marriage and began wearing symbolic clothes of adulthood, as discussed in Chapter Two, indicates how *the wild* can work for ideas of growth. Notably, Camp Wildfire, as explored in Chapter Three, also frames adults' play as wild, *Slow Loris* interprets unexpected sideways behaviour as "really wild" (Deacon, 2015, n.pag.), and, in *Unbecoming*, sideways growth is strongly tied to unpredictability. However, I acknowledge that the terms *wild* and *wilderness* have particular connotations in, for example, racist and sexist discourses as well as Romanticist discourses. Therefore, I approach these ideas without idealising them, and pay specific attention to gendered manifestations of them. Building on Halberstam's concept, I investigate wilderness as a type of landscape that, less structured by socio-cultural conventions and landmarks of civilisation that embody them such as buildings and fences, is particularly well suited to experimentation, and wildness as an attitude or set of behaviours facilitated by, or in kinship with, wilderness.

The meaning of wilderness depends on that of home. Tuan proposes a fluid, individual model of home as "a succession of concentric circles", from the familiar and secure "homeplace", where an individual sleeps and eats, to the wider "home space" around it, in which they roam comfortably, to the unfamiliar and threatening "alien space" beyond (1993/1995, pp. 139-140). Considering that the strategies of containment employed in twenty-first century Britain alter homeplaces and home spaces, the alien space of wilderness, beyond urban streets, surveillance cameras, and parental authority, is a promising landscape for release. Whereas Britain lacks wildernesses as vast, extreme, dangerous, or remote as Antarctica, Canada, or Alaska, it features inhospitable areas in mountains and the Highlands, and areas with no or minimal human interference and

human-built structures. I focus on the latter as a type of wilderness that is little structured by society at large, physically, commercially, and otherwise.

Like spaces of containment that feel both restrictive and secure, wilderness is ambiguous. Tuan asserts that alien spaces such as deserts can be both "life-negating in severity" and "overpoweringly beautiful", and attract "[f]ew societies in the world (and these are usually materially advanced and self-confident) and few individuals in any society" (1993/1995, p. 140). Release through wilderness, then, is not universally appealing or available, even in terms of more local, semi-wild spaces. Adults, especially well-off adults, can access remote wildernesses more easily than children. Whereas imaginative release, through fiction, is more universally accessible, it is also ideologically shaped. Children's fiction often depicts wilderness as "antithetical to home and safety" (J. S. Carroll, 2011, p. 76) and, frequently following a "home/away/home pattern" (Nodelman, & Reimer, 1992/2003, pp. 197-198), prioritises the eventual re-integration of protagonists into civilisation. For example, in American Maurice Sendak's picturebook *Where the Wild Things Are* (1963), a boy escapes into a forest with wild creatures but, eventually, leaves this wilderness for his mother's food, re-integrating into his homeplace. Zoe Jaques argues that children, "not yet fully inculcated into the boundaried, adult ordinances of human civilisation and mastery" connect more easily to "the potential wildness within the world and within themselves", and cites Sendak's picturebook as an iconic example of childhood being seen "as a time in which wildness is to give way to the prescriptions of adulthood and the domination of nature" (2017, p. 45). Tuan, as Jaques acknowledges, shares this observation of upwards growth's interest in containing wildness: "[t]he small child is a piece of wild nature that must be subdued" and "trained", like "a pet" (1984, p. 115). Risk-averse parenting, then, not only restricts children's access to local wild spaces, but also contains children's wildness. This relationship between containment and wildness is political. Noting that *will* and *wild* "are etymologically connected",

Griffiths argues that European cultures, by subscribing to the idea "that the will of the child must be overridden", teach children "that they can't depend on their own judgement" and need "to be obedient to somebody else", which, "politically, is very frightening" (in Bond, 2018, 01:13:27). In another political aspect, spatial indepdence, including access to wild spaces, is gendered: girls roam less independently than boys (Hillman, Adams, & Whitelegg, 1990, p. 30), which has been attributed to greater parental anxiety about girls' safety and girls having more domestic responsibilities (Valentine, & McKendrick, 1997, p. 222; Bond, 2018, 00:42:50). Embracing wildness and wilderness, then, can mean growing sideways by claiming autonomy and agency.

The picturebook *Wild* (2013) by Hughes, born in Hawaii but living in Britain, juxtaposes wild and civilised growth. Raised by wild animals before being captured by humans and taken to live with a psychiatrist and his wife, the child protagonist experiences both. Having been taught to speak like a bird, eat like a bear, and playfight like a fox, wilderness and wildness are her 'normal': "she understood, and was happy" (2013/2014, n.pag.). Thus, she feels that humans, insisting she speak differently, wear clothes, eat with cutlery, and play with toys, "did everything wrong". Her perspective presents common human behaviour as a convention rather than as the only way of growing. The child returns to the wilderness, followed by the couple's cat and dog, who discard their collars as she discards her clothes. Neither children nor animals are successfully domesticated as adults' pets in this book. They choose not to be tamed into upwards growth and, instead, grow sideways through wildness in a more uncertain space, wilderness.

The child's rejection of civilised upwards growth in favour of wildness and wilderness is particularly subversive because of her gender. Being female is often associated with an interest in appearances, manners, housekeeping, and family. In contrast, the protagonist shuns clothes altogether, feminine or otherwise. Furthermore, her plant-green hair still signifies wilderness even when the psychiatrist's wife contains it in braids.

She also dismisses mealtime etiquette, and rejects feminine toys. If toys, as Barthes argues, "prefigure the universe of adult functions" (1957/2013, p. 59), knitting instructions, stuffed animals, and a doll's house indicate that the protagonist's wildness is to be contained in favour of feminine skills such as crafting and caring for others. Instead of becoming submissive and relinquishing her independence, which, as children's gendered roaming patterns show, is demanded more strictly of girls than of boys in patriarchal societies such as Britain, the protagonist chooses wilderness, where her body is free, albeit dirty, and her relationships fulfilling but not hierarchical or traditionally familial. Perhaps being raised and cared for by a community (that works across species) rather than by one or two figures of authority encourages resilience against rules imposed by vague authorities such as a famed psychiatrist. Her "social intimacies" (Halberstam, 5 Sept. 2014) take a less predictable form that can be seen as *alloparenting*. The term *alloparents* denotes humans and other animals caring like a parent for an individual that is not their biological offspring (see Hrdy, 2009). Therefore, alloparenting as a strategy for raising children is particularly useful in queer families. Extending the range of influential adults in a child's life also extends their awareness of various possibilities of growing and living and, thereby, increases unpredictability as they have more pathways to choose from.

The picturebook taps into discourses of feral children, indicating that its protagonist also refuses to submit to gendered ideas of wildness. In his monograph *Savage Girls and Wild Boys: A History of Feral Children* (2002), Michael Newton defines *feral child*, which he uses interchangeably with *wild child*, as a child "brought up by animals" or "hav[ing] grown up alone in the wilderness" (2002, p. xiii). The accounts of lived experiences of such children he explores suggest that this concept is often associated with male children, who are brought into 'civilised' society as spectacles or scientific subjects, where they occupy an uncomfortable in between position as they lose their wilderness skills but fail to adapt entirely. They never return to their wilderness. Wildness and wilderness is similarly

temporary in an iconic fictional representation of a feral child, Mowgli from Rudyard Kipling's story collection *The Jungle Book* (1894) and *The Second Jungle Book* (1895). Mowgli was raised by wolves and can consecutively assume animal identities, yet, ultimately discards this fluidity as he grows up to take his place in human society: "Mowgli the Frog have I been, [. . .] Mowgli the Wolf have I said that I am. Now Mowgli the Ape must I be [. . .]. At the end I shall be Mowgli the Man" (1895/1975, pp. 172-173). Hughes's child protagonist is removed from her wilderness for a scientific and civilising mission but returns to it and continues to inhabit aspects of several animal identities simultaneously (not consecutively) instead of committing to civilised upwards growth into womanhood. However, from a feminist perspective, Elizabeth Ann Pearce argues that limiting females to one kind of space, whether it is nature or the house, is damaging because it restricts their agency (2014, p. 24; cf. Trites, 2018, p. 71). Hence, by having to choose either wilderness or civilisation, Hughes's child protagonist misses out on an in between position of sideways growth of her own design that could be more positive than that of Newton's feral children. The sideways growth she chooses, entirely embedded in wilderness, excludes her from other humans. Nonetheless, she is firmly at home in the alien space of wilderness. The final double-page spread depicts the protagonist clinging to a tree branch like a sloth smiling contentedly amidst cheerful wild and formerly domestic animals, concluding: "you cannot tame something so happily wild". Highlighting, like *Slow Loris*, the significance of pace, the visual sloth reference suggests that taking your time to grow differently from other animals is acceptable. If growing wildly leads to happiness, society should not, here is unable to, interfere. Calling humans "animals" nonchalantly, as in, "One day she met some new animals in the forest", the picturebook erases hierarchical distinctions between animal and human, wilderness and civilisation. Moreover, Hughes's dedication – "For my Mama, with all my wild heart" – indicates that

wildness can also be an internal attitude alongside or apart from wild behaviour and appearances.

Hughes recognises that containment and wildness affect adults and children. Only signalling this awareness in the picturebook itself by the couple's frustrated expressions at the child's resistance to their rules, she elaborates on it elsewhere. Hughes notes that the psychiatrist "has a lot at stake" because the girl, as a feral child case, could be "the pinnacle of his career", whereas his wife upholds traditional womanhood: "[t]he household needs to be orderly, children orderly, life orderly" (n.d., n.pag.). Joined by a wild girl "equipped for destruction", who refuses to submit to them, these adult characters are "having a hard time filling the positions society expects them to fill" (E. Hughes, n.d., n.pag.). Upwards growth into normative roles, whether age roles, gender roles or vocational roles, can also contain adults' wildness, limiting their perspectives, behaviours, and activities in favour of successful careers and "orderly" lives. Ordered, civilised, *contained* growth and spaces can be difficult for both a wild child and "orderly" adults, for their upkeep takes effort and is costly. The adult characters' effort is complicated by proximity to wildness as an alternative way of being and growing. Uncomfortable and unfamiliar with the uncertainty of the child character's wildness, the adult characters, as alloparents that are determinedly not queer, seek to render her certain, knowable, and legible within the grand narrative of upwards growth. That the child protagonist, for whom wilderness is home, and also the adult characters' pets, supposedly trained and tamed from birth, for whom wilderness is an alien space, choose wilderness, suggests that wildness and wilderness, to develop the relationship between wild animal's play and adults' play at Camp Wildfire explored in Chapter Three, can benefit even those trained for the expected rather than for the unexpected.

In contrast to restrictions on children's home ranges in their everyday lives, key authors of twenty-first century British children's literature let their child protagonists roam

freely, and successfully, in wildernesses even if they are not, like Hughes's protagonist, feral children. Geraldine McCaughrean's children's novel *The Middle of Nowhere* (2013), depicts the Australian Outback as a space which "makes almost anything possible" (2013/2014, p. 295), where ten-year-old Comity can connect with people across age, racial, and religious boundaries, and outmanoeuvre adults. In McCaughrean's children's novel *The White Darkness* (2005), fourteen-year-old Sym navigates and survives Antarctica, with the help of her imaginary companion Titus Oates, more successfully than adult characters. As discussed in Chapter Two, Boyce's *Cosmic* (2008) makes a similar case for outer space. Whereas, to date, all twelve human beings who have walked on the moon were men, Boyce places male and female child characters on it (2008/2009, p. 282ff), but maintains conventional power structures to an extent. Only one of the four children is female, and the message they write on the moon in rocks – "Hello, Dad!" – declares this wild space a location children have visited but dedicates it to a male figure of adult authority. Liam interprets this figure as a father, all fathers, God, and even the universe, amplifying the claim of masculinity to wild spaces.[24] S. F. Said's novel *Phoenix: A Boy with the Power of the Star* (2013) also depicts male and female child characters outmanoeuvring adult characters in outer space: they stop a war that threatens the existence of their galaxy. However, unlike McCaughrean's and Boyce's child protagonists, Said's protagonists' achievements are removed from conventional childhood, for the human boy is, in fact, a star in human form, and the other two child characters are aliens with special startalker abilities. Nevertheless, these novels imply that children, irrespective of their gender, can outperform adults in wildernesses and demonstrate that wildernesses, as they are often characterised as adult-only territories, if humans can navigate them at all, are effective settings to negotiate child-adult boundaries and grow sideways. They also indicate a

[24] The cover blurb of the 2015 Macmillan paperback edition of *Cosmic* underlines the moon-related gender bias by describing the story as "one giant leap for all boy-kind" ("Cosmic", n.d., n.pag.).

phenomenon of twenty-first century British authors setting release for their child characters in faraway places.

Almond writes about less distant, more accessible semi-wildernesses and the wildness they inspire, for example in *Kit's Wilderness* (1999). In its fictional mining town setting, wilderness is "an empty space between the houses and the river, where the ancient pit had been", which allows for wild behaviour, such as playing "the game called Death" (p. 5), and slippages between past and present, alive and dead: "The wilderness [. . .] is filled with those who have walked and played before" (p. 233). Set in the Northumbrian countryside and written well into the climate of increased surveillance and risk-averse parenting in Britain, Almond's *Jackdaw Summer* (2008) depicts a particularly integrated version of what Jane Suzanne Carroll calls "the direct correspondence between physical and imaginary landscapes" (2011, p. 19). Proposing that people can embody a space instead of merely being in it by relating the wilderness around his characters to the wildness within them, Almond challenges the 'civilising' process of upwards growth.

Encouraged by his parents, instead of contained by vague authorities, and vague himself, the protagonist Liam freely roams the wilderness beyond his homeplace as often, far, and wildly as he likes. His father merely shrugs when Liam skips school with only his chronological age as an excuse: "I'm young" (Almond, 2008, p. 144). When he decides to walk "into the back of beyond and beyond, disappearing from my old life" (p. 161), Liam leaves his parents an uninformative note: "*GONE WANDERING. BACK SOON-ISH. xL*" (p. 164). He carries an old pruning knife, which he considers to be "a weapon of war" and names "Death Dealer" (p. 3), and sleeps in a tent "out in the open" (p. 140) of his home space. Apart from "play[ing] endless war games" with other children (p. 39), Liam also "play[s] with fires" and "sharpen[s] Death Dealer" (p. 147). Whereas adventure playgrounds allow such wild behaviours in firmly fenced-in spaces during opening hours, Liam engages in these activities without a fence, in a wide and varied stretch of

countryside, without a time limit. As Liam can access wild behaviours outside of fenced-in areas, wildness is opened up as a way of being rather than a set of behaviours temporarily tolerated by adults.

Growing sideways through wild behaviour in wilderness affects Liam's physical growth. As he "get[s] wilder and wilder", he is also "growing, getting stronger" (p. 39). His skin, the border between himself and his environment, documents his interactions with it: "The dust and soil's like a crust on my hands and arms. It mingles on my wrist with the dark red of drying blood, just like a painting or a map" (pp. 4-5). The blurring boundaries between the landscape and his body are aesthetically pleasing (as a painting) and useful (as a map). They are accepted by his parents because of his gender and their location – Liam is "just being a proper lad" and the "the point of living in the backwoods" is "get[ting] a bit of blood on you" (p. 44). Liam is aware of his parents' fascination with his wildness: "You don't want me boring and tame" (p. 141). His parents, perhaps able to afford leniency around wildness because of their own status as people who can afford to live on their art, also exploit Liam's wildness for their storytelling and photography. For example, Kate photographs Liam for a gallery: "She gets the pores, the scars and nicks and bruises. She blows the photos up until they're like paintings, like weird landscapes. She photographs my elbows, my knees, and the scabs there become like massive outgrowths on an alien world" (p. 73). Liam's skin, marked by the alien spaces he interacts with, becomes an alien space itself. His wild spatial practices create a wild body, which comes with expanded senses: Liam can look at the landscape from above and note friends arriving before they are physically close (p. 158). If his parents can explain it through his gender, contextualise it as belonging in a rural space, and view it as art, growing sideways through wildness is acceptable.

Set against the backdrop of military exercises in the area and a sense of war looming, for Liam, wilderness is more than a playground. In case "the awful things out

there in the world arrived in Northumberland" (p. 14), Liam, together with his friend Max, envisions wilderness as a potential home space for an alternative community that resists established norms. They would "head northwards with a tent", weapons, fishing rods, and traps to "hide", and, if they find other children, "start a new society out here in Northumberland [. . .], close to nature: no violence, no wars, no waste" (p. 14). In preparation, they "spent whole days walking north", found "secret sheltered spaces", and hid supplies (p. 14). The desire to turn wilderness into homeplaces and home spaces is explicitly related to growth when Max loses interest in wilderness and wildness, and instead begins to follow scripts of upwards growth by starting a romantic relationship and planning his career. Liam states Max is "getting too old for sleeping out" (p. 140) and Max claims that a romantic interest in girls equals "growing up" (p. 42). Dismissing their plan to create an alternative society of autonomous children as "childish" (p. 14), Max submits to adult authorities' plans for his future: "I've been [. . .] talking to my dad and the teachers [. . .]. It's obvious, really. I should be something like an agricultural engineer" (p. 42). This future profession seeks to coerce and cultivate landscapes for commercial purposes, whereas his childhood attitude to nature aimed to create independent, wild communities in and with wilderness. Liam continues to invest in their childhood plan and replies to Max demanding he forget their hiding places and "Grow up" by saying "you grow down, you boring git." (p. 149). Upwards growth is thus presented as predictable, boring, a loss of autonomy, and reversible. For Liam, growth is neither linear nor straightforwardly upwards:

> I want to be me like I was then, and me as I am now, and me like I'll be in the future. [. . .] I want to be crazy as the moon, wild as the wind and still as the earth. I want to be every single thing it's possible to be. I'm growing and I don't know how to grow. (p. 41)

Liam's version of growth is wild: idiosyncratic, multidirectional, connected with nature, alive with possibilities, and uncertain. Liam's wild growth, like Hughes's wild child's, allows for inhabiting multiple identities at once. The hint at nature-related, more specifically lunar, madness in "crazy as the moon" echoes Camp Wildfire's "dance around in the forest like lunatics" ("FAQs", n.d., n.pag.), implying that sustained, long-term wildness is considered insane, abnormal, within the grand narrative of upwards growth. Growing wildly, Liam is routinely mistrusted by the police who see Liam as "headed for bother if nobody keeps a leash on him" (p. 216) and parents: "I wouldn't like to think you were stopping our Max getting on" (p. 152). Perceiving his sideways growth as threatening, adults respond to Liam's wildness with a desire to tame and contain him.

Liam's wild growth also signals his privilege. Crystal and Oliver, child characters escaping into wilderness from the containment of foster homes, are less privileged. Crystal declares herself "a wild girl" (p. 179) but admits that she would rather live a secure life in a family like Liam's. Oliver, who was forced to become a child soldier and has both seen and inflicted lethal violence, would prefer to forget these skills and experiences that render him another kind of wild. In contrast to the idea that adults need to tame children's wildness, Oliver describes adults cultivating and exploiting wildness to train child soldiers: "Why children? [. . .] we will think that war is play. Because we just love to be wild" (p. 200). Unlike Liam's, Oliver's wildness, which is enforced and a lethal weapon, is presented as so negative that Oliver wants to discard it. When he attempts to overcome his past, people remain suspicious of his wildness, wondering whether "the evil in him come to stay" (p. 217), indicating that involuntary sideways growth can suspiciously place individuals outside upwards growth. Calling Liam a dreamer and a wild boy, as if they are the same thing, Crystal implies that wildness is a dream he can afford but a reality her and Oliver cannot shake: "'You're a dreamer, aren't you?' she says. 'You're a wild boy, Liam.'" (p. 91). Growing sideways in wildness and wilderness is a privilege more easily

accessed by affluent white males, who can pursue release leisurely, as a dream, because they are less urgently contained.

Kate's attitude to wilderness is similarly privileged; her paintings, known "for the wildness that's in them, for the edge of violence" (p. 29), commodify it. Wildness can signal sideways growth especially in adults, who ought to have grown out of it during childhood. However, for Kate, wildness is also part of her tried-and-tested artistic repertoire, and an interest that is socio-culturally acceptable because it is confined to a particular site of experimentation, art. Whereas Kate seeks to "nurture the parts of us that aren't savage" by finding beauty in wilderness (p. 80), the local child Gordon Nattrass, whose family is less loving and supportive of his wildness than Liam's, nurtures savage parts in himself and others. Gordon dares children to balance over a pit filled with snakes, carries weapons, and threatens Liam. Kate's wildness is an aestheticised curiosity; Gordon's wildness, because it involves violence towards other people, is akin to Oliver's. Even Gordon's art uses wildness more violently and provocatively than Kate's. Instead of being contained by CCTV, Gordon uses surveillance methods to enact situations of containment and violence, such as beheadings and hangings, to demonstrate that "all of us are beasts at heart" (p. 107). When his version of wildness-made-art anonymously replaces her work in a gallery, Kate dismisses it as "voyeuristic trash" (p. 137). While children and adults can use wildness productively, Kate and Gordon's motives and methods differ. However, both, to an extent, capitalise on wildness much like some participatory play opportunities turn play into a commodity. Camp Wildfire even sells an idea of wildness alongside play. There seems to be a tipping point where growing sideways slips into a capitalist opportunity, where it is as much, or perhaps more, about being noticed and bought (in both senses) than idiosyncratic exploration and experimentation.

Through examining approved and unacceptable forms of violence, Almond explores limits to wilderness and wildness, suggesting that some boundaries are necessary.

Soldiers advertise joining the army to Liam as "It's a great life! [. . .] Get good mates! See the world! Learn to maim and kill!" (p. 11). Whether or not this utterance is sarcastic, adults training other adults to kill is socially acceptable in some circumstances. National interests and safety justify training adults in Oliver's kind of wildness, lethal violence. However, in Britain, children are not permitted that kind of wildness. Whereas Oliver seeks to contain his wildness, Liam has wild dreams "filled with war, with snakes, with bloody wounds, disaster and death" (p. 43) and realises them by stabbing Gordon in a fight in the wilderness. Liam is reprimanded, rather than commended, even by soldiers – spurred on by being in the wilderness, Liam has taken his wildness too far across age boundaries. However, again, gender and location justify even violent wildness for adults: "We were boys, we were stupid, we didn't know what we were doing. I was a kid messing about with a pruning knife I thought was treasure. Nattrass was a country boy who whittled sticks, hunted rabbits" (p. 216). Hence, the boys' only punishment is a move towards more containment as their parents are "ordered to take more control of [them]" (p. 216). Although it is implied that Liam contains some of his 'savage' mindscape through changing his physical landscape, by burying Death Dealer in the garden, Almond presents wilderness as a space where children and adults can explore their own wildness, and wildness as an alternative growth choice, at least for the privileged. Context determines what kinds of wildness are acceptable and who is allowed what kind of release. Adults are more entitled to use violence, and white middle-class boys are more entitled to roaming the wilderness than a female foster child and a black foster child. Growing sideways through wildness and wilderness is more acceptable for those whose age, gender, or race privileges them.

Focusing on child characters who roam wilderness without wildness, Gary's *Ostrich Boys* (2008) explores abandoning technology as release and highlights limitations of wilderness as a space for sideways growth. The adolescent protagonists Blake, Kenny,

and Sim travel from Cleethorpes, England to the village of Ross, Scotland to scatter their friend Ross's ashes because they were disappointed by his funeral. Their destination stems from Ross's plan "to find himself" there because "[h]e thought it'd be cool to *be* Ross *in* Ross" (2008, p. 21, emphasis in original). The protagonists travel without adult permission because they assume that adults would not "understand why we wanted to do this, so no way would they agree to letting us do it" (p. 53). Due to the wider climate of containment, they need to evade adult authorities throughout; their status as children hinders their release.

The protagonists are technologically tethered to adult authorities. Analysing *Ostrich Boys*, Leanne Hooper notes that mobile phones signify "a tension between autonomy and connection reflecting a central struggle for many children growing up in an era of continually advancing technology" (2016, p. 13). She refers to Sherry Turkle, who asserts that upwards growth "is now transformed by technology" as, for example, children are "tethered" by mobile phones that "br[ing] along" parents "in an intermediate space", with the expectations that "children are to answer their parents' calls" (2008, p. 127). Gray's protagonists decide to evade parental control by turning off their phones during their journey. Blake recognises the significance of this pact for aetonormative power structures: "Ignoring my mum's call was dangerous enough; switching it off altogether was close to mutiny" (Gray, 2008, p. 59). Kenny is equally hesitant because, while his phone has an 'off' button, "my mum hasn't" (p. 60), implying that some parents are perpetuum mobiles of containment. Expanding such tethering to other authorities than parents, Blake's mobile phone also causes him to internalise surveillance when he finds a police detective's message on it: he "see[s] Detective Sergeant Cropper peeking around every corner" and "hear[s] his heavy, serious voice in conversations behind [him]" (pp. 200-201). Albeit in different circumstances than Camp Wildfire's "going analogue", discussed in Chapter Three, turning off their phones is a way of entering the wild for the protagonists, as it

removes them from trappings of civilisation, their usual and expanding networks of control and communication. Where conventional structures that contain them are evaded, growing sideways becomes possible.

Travelling to and through wilderness, rather than roaming it for its own sake, affects the protagonists in specific ways. The fact that Cleethorpes is described as "a dead-end: the trains only come this far" (p. 58), indicates, as Hooper observes, "that there is no room for growth and development" in their home space (2017, p. 3). Leaving Cleethorpes, then, reveals possibilities of growth. By leaving this space, the protagonists gain romantic, and, it is implied, sexual experiences (p. 246ff), and thinking space to confront their own part in Ross's death (pp. 328-331). While these constitute upwards growth they could not access before, Blake potentially grows differently. Expanding his spatial experiences by "getting further and further away from what [he] knew" and visiting places he had "only ever heard about or seen on TV" (p. 139), he re-evaluates the punitive powers of adult authorities and acquires a more inquisitive attitude. He considers punishment to be ridiculously unfeasible – "what are they gonna do? Spank us? Ground us? Send us to 'Brat Camp'?" (p. 322) – and plans further exploration: "looking at all the places I hadn't been, promising myself all the places I'd go" (p. 283). These changes prime Blake for sideways growth, enabling him to experiment beyond aetonormative power structures and conventions. However, although wilderness serves as the protagonists' hideout, shelter, and destination, it provides less joyful release for them than for Liam in *Jackdaw Summer*. Travelling on foot through wilderness to evade adult attention takes more effort than conventional routes: gnats and uneven ground are "sucking" their energy and maps are "next to useless because we weren't following the roads" (p. 323). A derelict cottage in a "wilderness" (p. 239) provides night shelter but seems "haunted" (p. 224) and, even in this wilderness, the threat of surveillance remains: Blake "had the weird feeling we were being watched" (p. 265) and "couldn't forget the sound of the policeman on my voicemail" (p.

241). Blake and Kenny reach their destination, yet Ross seems an unpromising space for identity-formation: "The bay funnelled the wind and the cry of seagulls. I could smell the dank mud that had been exposed by the retreating tide. It felt empty and deserted" (p. 344). Even in this remote place, surveillance stays on Blake's mind: "The beam from the lighthouse swept across the water towards me, didn't quite reach me, swept away again." (p. 346). Indeed, Ross is where the police catch the protagonists. Wilderness only provides partial release and, unlike in *Jackdaw Summer*, is not imagined as a long-term home space by the protagonists. Their lack of familiarity with wilderness suggests that they are less inclined to wildness than Liam and more in tune with children emotionally and physically removed from wilderness through screen-based indoor activities and risk-averse parenting. Successfully growing sideways in a wild space, then, requires an inclination to wildness, or an affective interest in wilderness; otherwise, it remains an alien space that only provides limited release and more predictable growth.

Release through wilderness has limitations for the protagonists, and because of the protagonists, also in terms of gender. Wilderness fails to release the protagonists from myopic perspectives. For example, they frequently sexualise and objectify females. Sim declares he would "die happy" after having gotten "a good look" at Ross's sisters "massive tits" (pp. 196-197) and implies girls are inferior by telling Kenny that he is "even more chicken-shit than a girl" (p. 207), while Blake notes that "women were magnetic – always making us want to point North" (p. 203). They also think of romantic relationships in terms of ownership: "You were messing with his girlfriend. He's kind of got the right to want to slap you." (p. 260; cf. p. 327). Moreover, their gender allows the boys to travel relatively safely even in wild spaces. In contrast, three adolescent girls they talk to in a non-wild environment, on a train, feel that they have to lie about being met at the destination of the train in what Blake reads as an "underlying threat [. . .] aim[ed] at us" (p. 204). Had this

encounter happened in a wild space, they might have felt even more unsafe, suggesting, to extrapolate, that growing sideways in wild spaces is riskier for females than for males.

Such gendered limitations of wilderness are a wider phenomenon. In Lucy Christopher's young adult novel *Stolen: A Letter to my Captor* (2009), the sixteen-year-old protagonist Gemma is abducted by a man in his twenties, Ty, to keep him company in the wilderness of the Australian Outback. Here, a space of release doubles as a space of containment. Ty embodies wildness through his behaviour and appearance, moving "like a hunter" (p. 4), eating "like a street dog" (p. 47), and with a back "firm, brown as bark" (p. 11). Wilderness is his release: he "made [his] escape by coming here" (p. 30) and, more reminiscent of *Jackdaw Summer*'s Liam than the protagonists in *Ostrich Boys*, Ty has an affective relationship with wilderness that enables him to live apart from society and its norms: "to survive this land, you need to love it" (p. 212). Gemma's wildness is of a different order: she is Ty's prey, a moth "trapped [. . .] in the net" (p. 9). For her, wilderness is an involuntary destination where she is contained by an adult man and the landscape itself, both passively – "Where would I run to? Everywhere looked the same" (p. 20) – and actively: "The land was beating me, wearing me down like it had worn down the rocks" (p. 189). Unlike for the protagonists of the captivity narratives discussed above, for Gemma, containment extends beyond built environments. Wilderness and wildness benefit the male adult character's sideways growth and are employed by him to contain the female child character. Almond's *Wild Girl, Wild Boy: A Play* (2001), while depicting wilderness as delightful release for its female child protagonist, also reflects some of its gendered limitations. Elaine is introduced to wilderness and wildness through her father who tells her to "Crawl deep into the wilderness" and "Get lost in there" (2001/2002, p. 20) and, after his death, accompanied by a child version of him, "Wild Boy" (p. 15). Elaine's wildness is equated with madness by a chorus of voices that includes school children (pp. 27, 37-38) and treated by a Doctor (p. 39). Moreover, a neighbour actively tries to correct

her wild growth: “Give her rules and regulations. Discipline her. Tame her. It’s like gardening. [. . .] You show them what’s the right way and what’s the wrong way to grow. [. . .] [O]therwise, there’s just wilderness” (p. 70). Comparing Almond’s depiction of Liam in *Jackdaw Summer* to Elaine’s is revealing: whereas Liam is mainly self-driven, Elaine is led to wilderness and in her wildness by male characters; although she harms nobody, her wildness is medicalised and severely threatened instead of excused; and her wilderness is an overgrown allotment rather than a vast countryside. That representations of wilderness in British children’s literature are often highly gendered can also be seen in twenty-first century representations of Antarctica, where, even as less stereotypical depictions have been emerging since the 1990s, female protagonists are rare, and male protagonists frequently assert their rights to ‘conquer’ feminised wilderness (see Moriarty, 2018). Furthermore, gendered limitations of wilderness emerge in lived experience. Writing under the name Vanessa, a woman who stopped hiking the Pacific Crest Trail in 2017 “because of toxic masculinity and bro culture in the hiking community” (5 Feb. 2018, n.pag.), illuminates the wider phenomenon. While acknowledging that not all women share her experiences, that not all hikers discriminate, and that she herself is privileged “as a white person, as a cis person, as a person from a financially secure family”, Vanessa recounts experiences with male and female hikers that include mansplaining, and patronising, sexist, and objectifying comments (5 Feb. 2018, n.pag.). Vanessa argues that, because people are shaped by them, it is impossible to “run away to the woods [. . .] and somehow escape the oppressions that are wound tightly into the fabric of American life and have a utopian community where everyone feels safe” (5 Feb. 2018, n.pag.). Wilderness is not free from prejudice and privilege.

If the unpredictability of wilderness has limitations, then sideways growth is also limited by prejudice and privilege, for not everyone is able to access wilderness and not everyone who can access wilderness will find release in it. In Hughes’s *Wild*, adults

attempt to steer the girl protagonist towards traditional female gender roles and away from wilderness and wildness but are unsuccessful because she was raised by wild animals and, therefore, is less easily hailed by upwards growth. In *Jackdaw Summer* and *Ostrich Boys*, whose child protagonists were raised within rather than apart from society, gendered limitations of wildness and wilderness are more pronounced, for they provide release more easily for males. Gemma's relationship with wilderness, although she comes to appreciate it, remains fraught by her experience as a man's captive: "[Y]ou did steal me. But you saved my life too. And somewhere in the middle, you showed me a place so different and beautiful, I can never get it out of my mind" (Christopher, 2009, p. 294). Wilderness is a space where people, especially those less inclined to wildness, easily feel or get lost. Aptly, the adjective *wild* also denotes "the idea of being lost, unruly, disorderd, or confused" (Nash, 1967/1982, p. 1). However, being and getting lost can be a strategy for sideways growth.

Disorientating Spatial Practices

Drawing on phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty's suggestion that moments of disorientation cause "'the intellectual experience of disorder, but [also] the vital experience of giddiness and nausea'", Ahmed finds merit in embracing disorientation: "if we stay with such moments then we might achieve a different orientation toward them", gaining "vitality as well as giddiness" and potentially "find[ing] joy and excitement in the horror" (2006, p. 4). Getting and being lost can be valuable and, I add, provide unexpected experiences and perspectives that are otherwise unavailable, suppressed, or dismissed in situations of containment. Jeffers's picturebook *Lost and Found* (2005) offers a similar realisation. Its penguin character appears on the doorstep of a boy, "look[ing] sad and [. . .] lost" (2005, n.pag.). However, when the boy takes the penguin to Antarctica, where he presumes it came from, and leaves it there, the penguin "looked sadder than ever".

Eventually recognising their mutual loneliness, they reunite and return to the boy's home together. Being lost, then, can mean finding a more enjoyable life. Mapping life trajectories onto landscapes, Ahmed further considers getting lost in terms of deviating from social norms:

> *The more a path is used the more a path is used.* [. . .] Without use a path can disappear, becoming overgrown, bumpy; unusable. [. . .] A path can appear like a line on a landscape. But a path can also be a route through life. [. . .] [H]eterosexuality for instance can become a path, a route through life, a path that is kept clear, maintained not only by the frequency of use, a frequency can be an invitation, but by an elaborate support system. When it is harder to proceed, when a path is harder to follow, you might be discouraged [. . .] Deviation is hard. Deviation is made hard. (24 Oct. 2017, n.pag., emphasis in original)

Like Halberstam, Ahmed frames deviating from heteronormativity as exploring wilderness – here "overgrown" paths – and adds that such deviation necessitates making an effort, for it is "made hard" by established power structures. The protagonists of *Ostrich Boys* experience this need for increased effort in their wilderness. Similarly, deviating from the path of upwards growth can be hard. Yet getting lost, straying from the path of upwards growth, and losing the plot can be potentially positive experiences of release from being contained by the grand narrative of growth, either as a temporary suspension of societal pressure or as a sustainable alternative, if deviation leads to different, or creates new, paths.

Developing Ahmed's concept, I consider disorientation, whether getting lost accidentally or deviating on purpose, as a queer spatial practice that disorients people from their directions, and spaces from their usages, through unexpected movements. The idea of unexpected movements relates disorientation to the notion of play as training for the unexpected, which, in animals, includes losing balance. In humans, such unexpected spatial practices, to borrow Timotheus Vermeulen's interpretation of de Certeau's concept

of space, include "potentially anarchic movement" such as "tak[ing] routes that aren't time-efficient or cost-effective, for instance, or if you skateboard or do parkour, creating your own, alternative path where there wasn't one" (24 Apr. 2015, n.pag.). Characterised by looting, breaking into, destroying, and burning shops instead of entering them in more respectful ways and paying for wares, the 2011 England riots exemplify extreme versions of such anarchic spatial practices, disregarding conventional patterns of consumption and public interactions, with some delight (see Spalek, Isakjee, & Davies, 2012). My understanding of queer spatial practices builds on Halberstam's coinage *queer space*, which denotes the "place-making practices of queer people within postmodernism" and "new understandings of space by the production of queer counterpublics" (2005, p. 6). Drawing on Samuel Delany, Halberstam defines counterpublic as a particular use of physical space, as "spaces created and altered by certain subcultures for their own uses" (2005, p. 186). Such "[q]ueer uses of [. . .] space" develop "at least in part, in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality, and reproduction" (Halberstam, 2005, p. 1). I extend Halberstam's term from its context of sexual orientation to describe spatial practices that queer boundaries between childhood and adulthood in the grand narrative of growth and create queer spaces for sideways growth.

Disorientation can take different forms; I briefly highlight some pertinent examples before analysing my focal texts, Kitson's *Sal* and Meadows's *This Is England* cycle. In Alison Hume's children's television series *The Sparticle Mystery* (2011–2015) spaces are disorientated for the child protagonists by the disappearance of adult characters due to an experiment that accidentally sends people over the chronological age of fifteen into a parallel dimension. Without adult supervision and control, the child characters grow sideways by making sense of these spaces and surviving in them on their own. For example, Sadiq justifies looting for food, instead of paying for it, by declaring established structures irrelevant: "I am the law" (S1E1, 12:21), and they create their own community

and power structures through starting "tribe[s]" (S1E2, 02:30). Without upkeep by adults, some paths of upwards growth, in Ahmed's words, "disappear, becoming overgrown" (24 Oct. 2017, n.pag.). However, survival is hard; losing electricity and concerned about tap water supplies, the child protagonists form a rescue mission because "we need adults to fix it" (S1E4, 03:30), suggesting that the extent to which their sideways growth is possible and sustainable long-term depends on their skills and ability to improvise or imagine alternative systems. Patrick Ness's young adult *More Than This* (2013) also places child characters in adult-free spaces. His three protagonists accidentally de-digitalise from a virtual world and have to navigate the 'real' world that, in the absence of humans, has become a wilderness. Already physically disorientated from the society they used to live in, they are free to disorientate other aspects of it and emulate the weeds and grasses, which are "growing completely out of control and unchecked" (p. 65). If the title questions whether there is "more than this" conventional upwards growth contained in spaces constructed by adults, the novel implies that the answer is yes. Accidentally discarding technology, the protagonists also discard means of containment because, disoriented and orientating themselves, they see more clearly the 'reality' they have lost and its alternatives. However, their disorientation is "made hard" by a robot who incessantly threatens to re-connect them to the virtual world. Disorientation from technology as a means of containment can also involve using said technology for a different purpose. For example, the location-based augmented reality game for iOs and Android devices *Pokémon Go*, released in July 2016 and avidly played by children and adults across the world, relies on the player's mobile device's Global Positioning System (GPS), to impose virtual creatures, Pokémon, that can be caught, trained, and fought, onto the player's surroundings. As every location becomes a potential hiding place for Pokémon, 'real' private and public spaces become playable and 'virtual'. Using a tethering device (smartphone) to 'untether' public spaces through play unsettles the idea of surveilled,

restricted public space in some ways and yet may, as discussed in Chapter Three, de-sensitise players to instruments of control. Nevertheless, this irreverent usage of space contributes to a wider structure of feeling, according to which children and adults can play publicly and, in the process, destabilise spaces. "[F]requency of use" (Ahmed, 24 Oct. 2017, n.pag.) entrenches not only normative ideas but also alternative ideas. Focusing on purposeful and autonomous rather than accidental or other-directed disorientation, Kitson's *Sal* and Meadows's *This Is England* cycle explore disorientation particularly usefully in relation to sideways growth. The former's protagonist uses technology to survive in and disorientate a wilderness, and the latter's protagonists get lost productively and use spatial practices to disorientate restrictive and derelict public spaces. Both create homely queer spaces for growing sideways.

The thirteen-year-old titular narrator and protagonist of *Sal* (2018) releases herself from a restrictive home to make a wilder home in a wilderness, enabling herself through her usage of technology. When her alcoholic mother's boyfriend Robert, who has sexually abused Sal for three years, threatens to abuse her younger sister Peppa, Sal meticulously and cunningly plans their release from this situation of containment. She kills Robert and takes Peppa to the Galloway Forest Park to evade being contained by the police for her crime. In the process, Sal disorientates her homeplace by asserting spatial control over adults: she terminates Robert's abusive use of her bedroom and fits a lock to her mother's bedroom door in order to, by locking her in beforehand, prevent her from becoming a suspect. Sal's post-murder plan of "running and surviving" (2018, p. 73) disorientates both children from home towards a space where they have more agency. Sal violates age, spatial, and legal boundaries for her and Peppa's emotional survival, growing sideways out of necessity because the surrounding adults themselves violate age boundaries and neglect adult and parental responsibilities.

The forest park is a particular kind of wilderness that Sal disorientates by making a home within it. She "chose this place very carefully using an Ordnance Survey map" and describes it as "the Last Great Wilderness in the UK", although it, being "exactly eight miles form the nearest human habitation", is not very remote (p. 3). Her chosen wilderness is wild enough to be less tightly governed by technology and adult structures than other spaces, permitting her to evade adult attention. However, this wilderness is also contained and close enough to a village to allow Sal to access it via public transport and to buy supplies when needed. By using it differently than tourists, such as English student Adam who visits it for cross-country skiing during a holiday (p. 173), and rangers who patrol it, Sal creates a queer space also in Halberstam's sense. She transforms this alien space into a homeplace and homespace by building a shelter, hunting, curing animal skins for clothing, and telling her sister bedtime stories. Their everyday spatial practices for homemaking and surviving create a queer space within the wilderness where Sal and Peppa are self-sufficient without adult support.

To succeed in disorientating this wilderness, Sal purposefully grows sideways intellectually by using technology to learn wilderness skills and acquire relevant gear. Because of her severe dyslexia and despite her high intelligence, Sal is in a "special unit for vulnerable learners" at school, where she can "be online most of the day" (p. 48, cf. pp. 97-98). Sal takes advantage of getting lost in mainstream education by using this internet access at school, and elsewhere, to educate herself beyond conventional school subjects: "Most of the stuff I know, I know from Wikipedia and websites about things I am interested in, and also from YouTube videos and from TV" (p. 48). Sal acquires wilderness skills such as "making fires and shelters, snaring food, making bird traps, filtering water, reading tracks and watching the weather"; facts about British wildlife, including "the Latin names of all the native British trees"; knowledge about cooking, nutrition, and cures for ailments; and the ability to "read a map, do grid references, plot a course with a compass

and work out elevations and gradients" (p. 49). Sal also learns "how to set up email accounts which you need if you are buying stuff on Amazon with dodgy cards [stolen by Robert]" (p. 49) to order, for example, a Bear Grylls knife. Skills and gear acquired through internet and television allow Sal to access activities and spaces conventionally reserved for adults, and queer the spatial practice of surviving through her identity, for she notes that most survival experts, such as Bear Grylls, "are posh and English" (pp. 9-10). The experts she mentions are also male. In contrast, Sal is working class, Scottish, and female, and her half-sister Peppa who, once initiated into Sal's plan, similarly educates herself via YouTube (p. 73), is mixed-race. Sal in particular is as capable of surviving as the famous experts and becomes an expert herself. She is such an authority on wilderness that it affects her mindset: "I felt for a minute like I had always done this. I had always been able to thread a rabbit skin onto a frame and this wasn't the first time." (p. 21). Furthermore, Sal's usage of technology is significant in terms of ideas of childhood. Other students at her school use technology to distract themselves from lessons via Snapchat, Instagram, and porn (p. 99) and a wider British discourse fears that children are being distanced from wilderness through technology. Recognising children's shifting interests, the Oxford Junior Dictionary replaced words associated with nature, such as *acorn*, *bluebell*, and *conker* with technological words, such as *broadband*; these changes were protested in an open letter signed by, for example, children's authors Nicola Davies and Michael Morpurgo on 12th January 2015 ("Authors' Letter to the Oxford University Press", 15 Jan. 2015, n.pag.). Co-signatories Robert Macfarlane and Jackie Morries even counteract concerns about children's decreasing natural literacy in their picturebook *The Lost Words* (2017), whose poetry and illustrations restore words such as *conker*. Instead of being distracted or distanced from wilderness by it, Sal uses technology to improve her natural literacy and to familiarise herself with wilderness. However, Sal brings no technological devices into the wilderness itself rather than just turning them off, as in

Ostrich Boys, to avoid being traced by the police (p. 27). Yet, she occasionally uses the village library internet to consult newspapers on the success of her evasion and Twitter on her mother's whereabouts (p. 70). Furthermore, even when her resistance through disguises is unable to trick CCTV surveillance cameras (p. 67), police are unable to track her and Peppa. In each context, Sal uses technology purposefully, rather than being steered by it or controlled by adults through it. Growing sideways through technology, Sal is able to secure her and Peppa's survival in the wilderness for months, during winter.

Sal and Peppa further grow sideways within the wilderness. For example, they meet seventy-five-year-old Ingrid, an East German doctor, who has also made wilderness her homeplace. Retiring, Ingrid had enough money to buy a house but "wanted to live in the forest in a bender and trap food and walk and have fires at night under the stars. So she did." (p. 168). Wilderness is her release from chrononormative trajectories and her own history of containment, for example during the GDR's culture of surveillance, which also means that she does not threaten Sal and Peppa's release: "I will never inform on anyone" (p. 107). Ingrid's wilderness skills include an acute sense of smell. She can smell intruders "if the wind is right" and "rain coming and snow" (p. 119), suggesting that living in wilderness, she grows sideways into it. Sal, Peppa, and Ingrid form an all-female community, exchanging company, labour, presents, skills, and knowledge. For example, Sal and Peppa collect firewood (p. 113), and Ingrid teaches Peppa German (p. 81) and Sal how to bake bread and make candles (p. 123). Together, they release Sal and Peppa's mother from her containment in a rehabilitation facility and invite her into their community. Neither Ingrid nor their mother have authority over the child characters in the wilderness. Ingrid keeps the children's secrets and treats them respectfully, and Sal, having grown sideways because of her mother's neglect, makes demands of her mother rather than vice versa, for example threatening her at gunpoint to prevent her from leaving Peppa for alcohol (pp. 199-205). Kitson's representation of wilderness as a queer homeplace where

female child and adult characters can grow sideways provides a significant counterpoint to representations that privilege (white) male characters' in wild spaces, as in *Jackdaw Summer*, *Ostrich Boys*, and *Stolen*. Sal, Peppa, and Ingrid especially inhabit wilderness more thoroughly and long-term than Liam, Blake, Kenny, and Sim, and render it a more positive queer space of sideways growth than Ty. Sal acknowledges gendered ideas of wilderness and wildness to evade adult authorites by taking advantage of her ability to pass for male when buying supplies in the village. Wearing her hiking clothes and "a hat with [her] hair up in it" to look like "a lad or a scout out in the forest" (p. 60), she passes successfully (p. 64). Her ploy suggests that adults are less concerned about, and less likely to interfere with, boys in wild spaces; the Scouting trope further legitimises boys' presence in nature. Sal's interest in surviving and wilderness is framed as not conventionally feminine both by situating her amongst male survival experts and by a friend's father who says "not many lassies" would want to learn how to gut mackarel (p. 61). Sal, Peppa, and Ingrid grow sideways of gendered limitations, and conventional expectations of their age category, by asserting their agency through their skills, their community, and their interest in wildness and wilderness. As in *More Than This*, however, disorientation from conventional ideas of growth is "made hard". Sal, Peppa, their mother, and Ingrid ultimately are forced to leave the wilderness. Nevertheless, the novel suggests that, at least temporarily, children and adults can escape aetonormative and chrononormative spaces, and disorientate wilderness together.

In Meadows's *This Is England* cycle, the protagonists frequently are lost in or disorientate spaces. Driving to a countryside rave, in itself a deviant use of space by young people that has a history of police confrontations in Britain (see Chester, 28 May 2017, n.pag.), Gadget, Kelly, Shaun, Harvey, and Trev get lost (S3E2). They get lost both because Gadget is an incompetent map-reader, holding it upside down, disorientating first it and subsequently themselves, and because the location of the rave was unclear to begin

with, to avoid authorities interfering. This suggests that disorientation is "made hard" by established power structures and that disorientated spaces are purposefully "made hard" to find to protect them from re-orientation according to conventional uses of space. Lost in a forest, the gang decide to create their own dancing space there instead of "driving all the way back home to do fuck all" (S3E2, 22:38); they embrace being lost as a queer space in between destinations and make it useful for them. Subsequently, they hear music and follow it, assuming they have found the rave after all, but, instead, find a hippie celebration in a field.

Joining without invitation, they find themselves in a new community that, like theirs, differs from mainstream paths. Disorientated from their usual way of being, they experience a range of positive and negative wildness: they join clad and naked hippies in exuberant dancing, Shaun has a therapeutic conversation with an elderly woman about coming to terms with losing his father to the Falkland's War, and Kelly has a harrowing sexual experience with a group of men. This disorientated space is liberating and dangerous. Kelly's experience implies that there are risks to leaving conventional, 'beaten' paths and, as with the gendered limitations of wilderness, disorientating spatial practices can still be subject to the trappings of mainstream society. The rave and the hippie camp are presumably only temporarily rather than long-term disorientated spaces and the gang has no intention of staying long at either. This temporariness of alternative spaces may suggest that disorientation, and sideways growth, is not permanent, that upwards growth will resume at some point. However, the gang's commitment to sideways growth, which at any rate includes stop-and-start, non-linear, back-and-forth motions, is evident in their frequent engagement in disorientation throughout the cycle, particularly in the film, which sets up their spatial practices.

The gang disorientate spaces by transforming derelict or empty public spaces that exclude them into communal spaces. As public spaces are unavailable, empty, or

undesirable – the job centre is closed when Shaun needs it, the streets are abandoned, and Woody and Lol's flat is ramshackle – there is no space for the protagonists to grow up as part of a community with adults within Thatcherist society. The community of the gang, shaped by play, as discussed in Chapter Three, offers an alternative to such upwards growth and also changes spaces for the gang members. Unlike in *Ostrich Boys*, where a derelict cottage merely serves as a short-term shelter, the gang invest in space emotionally. In *This Is England* (2006), a pedestrian tunnel, which at best is a neglected thoroughfare and at worst a sheltered space for violence, becomes a space of compassion, acceptance, and community. Woody, who already uses it as a communal space with his gang, asks Shaun, who is bullied and lonely, to "give [him] five minutes to make you feel better" (09:52) and invites him into their gang despite their differences in chronological age.

Being in the gang changes spaces for Shaun. Before joining, he is depicted as a solitary figure in vast and abandoned spaces. For example, he cycles through an old factory (14:52), walks on walls in empty streets (11:55), and sits in a stranded boat (14:47). None of these spaces, industrial, public, or semi-wild, afford him with a community, neither with peers nor adults. Although cycling in a building and balancing on walls can be disorientating spatial practices, Shaun himself, lonely and bored, remains stranded in these spaces. With the gang, even everyday public spaces such as empty streets and concrete structures (26:33) become positive places of community for cheerful socialising. Walking with them, Shaun's posture is more confident, and his facial expression happier; his new friends also pursue playful spatial practices, such as jumping in puddles (25:47). A public swimming pool, which is not abandoned but used by adults for swimming lanes, is disorientated playfully by the gang jumping into it together, messing up adults' orderly spatial practices (26:42). Similarly, when the gang disorientate empty buildings by destroying parts of them in fancy dress, as discussed in Chapter Three, they vent frustrations and bond. Through its strawyellow and earthy colours and Shaun's cowboy

hat, the shot of the gang leaving their hunting grounds (21:22) evokes the wilderness and wildness of Westerns, suggesting that, as a gang in an abandoned space, they are lawless and need not conform with conventional spatial practices or, to extrapolate, ideas of growth.

The gang's disorientating spatial practices, which create communal spaces, are caused by, and provide them with, alternatives to their failure to access adult spaces such as workplaces. Failure, as Halberstam notes, "allows us to escape the punishing norms that discipline behaviour and manage human development with the goal of delivering us from unruly childhoods to orderly and predictable adulthoods" and "disturbs the supposedly clean boundaries between adults and children, winners and losers" (2011, pp. 2-3). Failing to access adult spaces, the gang disorientate spaces that fail them sideways towards uses that sustain them emotionally. Through unexpected movements, they create queer spaces for sideways growth.

Wilderness, wildness, and disorientation can provide release from the certainties of containment and upwards growth by rendering them uncertain. If spaces are uncertain and queer, people within them, to borrow Sedgewick's definition of queer from Chapter One, "*can't* be made [. . .] to signify monolithically" (1993/1994, p. 8, emphasis in original) either. Whether as a space, an attitude, or a spatial practice, wilderness, wildness, and disorientation embrace unpredictability and experimentation, enabling alternative possibilities beyond, alongside, or in built environments. Advocating for mindfulness as a way of fluidly adapting to and re-evaluating changes during biological aging, psychologist Langer argues that "*certainty is a cruel mindset*. It hardens our minds against possibility and closes them to the world we actually live in. When all is certain, there are no choices for us. If there is no doubt, there is no choice" (2009, p. 24, emphasis in original). While growing sideways is not always possible to the same extent for everyone due to ideologically-bound obstacles around, for example, gender, embracing uncertainty in

wilderness, through wildness, or via disorientating spatial practices can be liberating and, whether begun voluntarily or involuntarily, open up more choices.

Conclusion: Containing Resistance and Release

Childhood and adulthood are both perceived as prisons in twenty-first century Britain because of a heightened effort to contain children and adults. Risk-averse parenting anxiously seeks to protect the boundaries of the category of childhood as they are being challenged. Surveillance culture suggests that children and adults are more alike than the grand narrative of growth allows: neither becomings nor beings can be trusted to behave appropriately. Through both strategies of containment, spatial progression upwards and aspects of upwards growth become undesireable or unattainable, and growth is directed sideways. Increased emphasis on particular forms of containment also triggers particular forms of resistance and release. If containment is ubiquitous and routine, it requires sideways glances to expose its oppressive patterns. Where containment is inescapable physically, it can be resisted through different mindsets, performances, and paces. If containment is imposed through strictly structuring space and containing certain spatial practices, then unpredictablity characterises resistance, and chaotic, uncertain spaces and spatial practices promise release. If children's access to wild spaces is restricted through risk-averse parenting or indoor activities, entering wilderness or becoming wild can provide release, even if only by disorientating readers' imaginations wildwards, as in *Wild* and *Jackdaw Summer*. If people are contained by technology such as CCTV or mobile phone tethers, that technology can be used for a different purpose, for example to create wild art as in *Jackdaw Summer*, play with physical spaces as in *Pokémon Go* or learn wilderness skills as in *Sal*, or it can be abandoned altogether, as in *Ostrich Boys* and *More*

Than This. If both children and adults are contained, both may seek resistance and release. Both, as the representations of resistance in *Unbecoming* and of release in *This Is England* cycle and *Sal* suggest, are available across age categories. Drawing on bell hooks, Redi Koobak and Suruchi Thapar-Björkert describe repression and resistance as "dialectical" (2014, p. 51). Containment and its sideways responses – resistance and release – also are dialectical, informing each other, just as upwards growth and sideways growth do.

Furthermore, containment, resistance, and release are ambiguous and limited. Containment is not absolute. Even those routinely ideologically contained by the grand narrative of upwards growth may feel that there is 'more than this'. In turn, resistance may not always secure escape, and release through wilderness, wildness, and disorientation is not equally available or desirable for everyone, as the dominance of male characters in the texts that I have discussed suggests. Like sideways growth in general, resistance and release come in various forms and degrees. Achieving release from restrictive homeplaces and home spaces does not require the outright rejection of the idea of home; instead, the texts discussed propose that home can be a fluid concept, challenging the conventional home-away-home pattern in all directions. Captivity narratives describe *away* as *home-ish* or *home* as feeling like *away*, indicating that containment renders homeplaces and home spaces repressive rather than safe spaces, or that safe feels repressive, and alienates the contained occupants. In contrast, narratives of release propose that anywhere from a cave in the Northumbrian countryside to city streets can become temporary or long-term homes through queer spatial practices. Especially when they occur frequently, purposefully, or collectively, temporary forms of release can also constitute sideways growth. Homes that shelter their occupants from the grand narrative of growth can be established even in alien spaces. As Doreen Massey observes of urban spaces in an era of globalisation, "places are processes" that resist definite boundaries, and coherent, singular identities but can still become uniquely important and specific for individuals and communities (1994/2007, p.

155). Treating places as processes also helps people be more fluid in their attitudes, life decisions, and growth, and vice versa. Fluid spaces can facilitate agefluid identities.

In the process of challenging aetonormative power structures through space, related binaries, such as civilised-wild, human-animal, technology-nature, and safe-unsafe are also questioned. Civilisation and wildness, human and animal, technology and nature can fruitfully inform each other and overlap. Spaces conventionally considered safe – surveilled, contained, predictable, or, like playgrounds, age-specific – can, in fact, be dangerous, because they allow for an abuse of control and power, or stifle upwards growth. Being unregulated, not signposted, and uncertain, spaces and spatial practices that are conventionally considered 'unsafe', or wild, can also foster sideways growth. To return to the diagram of potential manifestations of sideways growth from Chapter One, sideways growth can include (both spatially and more metaphorically) unexpected, wild movements; being or getting lost; and disorientating, purposefully or inadvertently, conventional ideas.

Conclusion:
Feeling Growth Sideways

Throughout this thesis, I have investigated how alternative, sideways ideas of growth are signalled, articulated, tested, experienced, and facilitated in the conceptual areas of appearance, play, and space across a range of examples from children's literature, film, television series, and participatory events in twenty-first century Britain. I have developed growing sideways as a concept that queers the grand narrative of upwards growth by destabilising the conceptual categories of childhood and adulthood and the boundaries between them. My research corpus, including my key text, Meadows's film and television cycle *This Is England* (2006–2015), and other significant primary material such as Boyce's children's novel *Cosmic* (2008), Hart's sitcom *Miranda* (2009–2015), Hughes's picturebook *Wild* (2014), and the adventure festival Camp Wildfire (2015–present), has allowed me to refine my concept of growing sideways through close readings and, as a whole, indicates that growing sideways is an emerging structure of feeling that unsettles conventional, normative ideas of upwards growth across varied cultural forms in different ways and to different extents, depending on contexts and power structures. I have predominantly focused on aetonormative power dynamics and, wherever fruitful, have explored these in relation to power structures around gender. This thesis is the first in-depth academic study to consider growing sideways as a distinct and important discourse worth analysing as an alternative, and a challenge, to the discourse of upwards growth. The grand narrative of upwards growth interrelates with many power structures and is an organising principle in culture and society that misses and dismisses other ways of being and growing. In contrast, growing sideways, while itself limited by established power

structures and not equally available to everyone at all times and in all circumstances, identifies, and frequently champions, such other ways of being and growing.

Key Findings and Contributions

A major output of this thesis is my concept of sideways growth. I have transformed a wide range of secondary material into an original working definition of growing sideways, have complicated this concept by applying it to different cultural forms, and have situated it in relation to theoretical material on appearance, play, and space. My concept can be utilised, and further developed, by other research endeavours, which I suggest as further areas of study below, as a toolkit for identifying, contextualising, and investigating alternative ideas of growth. In another important contribution, my thesis demonstrates that growing sideways, as a discourse, can productively be traced across cultural forms and within conceptual areas.

Analysing this range of primary material across conceptual areas has allowed me to identify continuities and limitations of sideways growth. My primary material, for example *Miranda*, *Cosmic*, and Camp Wildfire, frequently troubles more than one age boundary in the pursuit of sideways growth, and authors such as Boyce and Almond explore different aspects of sideways growth over several texts. Furthermore, across the primary material and conceptual areas, both children and adults are restricted by upwards growth and benefit from sideways growth. Growing sideways affects more than one conceptual area and age category; disturbing one boundary can entail disturbing another. Just as upwards growth affects numerous aspects of life, growing sideways can be, as I proposed in the Introduction, a holistic commitment spanning conceptual areas throughout a life course. In terms of limitations, I have focused on gendered patterns of growth. The prominence of

representations of male characters' sideways growth in the *This Is England* cycle and texts such as *Cosmic*, *The Dressing-Up Dad*, *Jackdaw Summer*, and *Ostrich Boys* suggests that the grand narrative of upwards growth is more lenient with males. Similarly, Trites describes a cultural narrative that falsely assumes that females "are more mature" than males "as a result of their ostensibly maternal nature" and "really have only one path to maturity: the predetermined path to parenthood", thereby "insinuat[ing] that male growth is more varied and interesting and thus deserves more attention and praise than female growth" (2014, p. 81). Diverging from the 'right' time for the 'right' cultural practices and spaces for growing up leads to anxiety and suspicion especially for females, who are traditionally expected to be growing down, in White and Pratt's sense of atrophying, instead of expanding the range of their appearances, attitudes, behaviours, and spaces. For example, wearing an animal onesie in public is perceived as a loss of sanity in *Miranda* as opposed to a loss of dignity in *Uncle*, and Elaine's non-violent wildness is medicalised in *Wild Girl, Wild Boy: A Play*, wheras Liam's violent wildness in *Jackdaw Summer* is accepted, even celebrated. While these value judgements imply that, as male growth is assumed to be more varied, growing sideways is less punitive for males, such gendered patterns are also subverted: Miranda and Elaine persist in their sideways growth, and the female protagonists in *Sal* take advantage of, rather than being undermined by, conventional ideas of wilderness that privilege males. Subverting gendered patterns may also involve devising an idiosyncratic terminology of sideways growth such as Miranda's *jollification* and Darcy Burdock's *mermelade* identity. Other limitations of sideways growth include economic concerns, when it becomes a commodity. Play for profit restricts access to its sideways possibilities by placing it in a ticketed context – not everyone can afford Camp Wildfire – and can, in the case of KidZania London, operate as capitalist training.

In the process of developing and applying my concept of growing sideways, I have contributed to several fields of research, most importantly queer theory and children's literature criticism. My research expands queer theory – inhabiting, as I explained in Chapter One, Sedgwick's placeholder "*and other*" (1993/1994, p. 9, emphasis in original) – by building on work that discusses age or growth in terms of sexual orientation, such as queer aging (Österlund, 2014), queer time (2005), and Stockton's notion of growing sideways (2009) to explore boundaries between childhood and adulthood, and investigate agefluid identities as valuable and valid. I have also developed concepts such as gender performativity (Butler, 1990; 1993), passing (Lingel, 2009), and cross-dressing (Bullough, & Bullough, 1993) for age. Queer theory has enabled me to theorise growing sideways as a way of feeling queer in the grand narrative of growth and as a way of queering it through alternative structures of feeling. Alongside focusing on adulthood as well as childhood, and exploring manifestations of upwards and sideways growth across conceptual areas and cultural forms, I have contributed to children's literature criticism by considering the concept of aetonormativity from various angles. I have continued Beauvais's endeavour to complicate ideas of child-adult power relationships by demonstrating, through close readings of texts such as *The Dressing-Up Dad*, *Cosmic*, *Black Dog*, and *Sal*, that adults, despite being privileged by the grand narrative of growth, can feel restricted by it, and that children can use established aetonormative power structures for their own purposes, manipulating or outperforming adults, asserting authority in the present, achieving a more balanced understanding of children's and adults' abilities and shortcomings, and releasing themselves from aetonormative spaces. Furthermore, adults can use their privileged position to create 'backstage' spaces, such as Camp Wildfire, where they can abdicate adult responsibilities and explore qualities and activities conventionally associated with childhood. Moreover, I have expanded existing theory and discussion of my conceptual areas by focusing more thoroughly on age and growth. For example, I have suggested that

appearance research and turn-of-the-twenty-first century debates of blurring age boundaries can be usefully combined, because they inform each other, and contributed to by studying appearance as a dimension of growing sideways. Building on theorisations of the benefits of play for animals, children, and adults, and linking these to twenty-first century cultural phenomena such as a trend of play for adults and the neologism *adulting*, I have explored play as training for unexpected growth, and as a queer way of living and growing for individuals and child-adult play communities. I have also drawn on ideas of wilderness, wildness, and disorientation from across disciplines and explored their synergies to conceptualise specific forms of release from the grand narrative of upwards growth.

Tilting the kaleidoscope of sideways growth, my research has arrived at a more complex pattern than it started from. My thesis demonstrates that age boundaries can be particularly effectively challenged through investing in liminality. Although the grand narrative of upwards growth relies on clear boundaries between childhood and adulthood, age boundaries are slippery to an extent in order to permit individuals to cross at the 'right' time. Growing sideways exploits the slipperiness of the underlying concepts of these boundaries, such as appearance, play, and space, to challenge upwards growth by acknowledging, embracing, and emphasising irregularity and fluidity. Hence, growing sideways explores liminality, being in between, not in terms of growth suspended or the sanctioned (because temporary) liminality of adolescence, but in terms of permission to experiment with growth outside, between, and beyond age categories, communities, and spaces. Growing sideways prioritises unpredictability, unorthodox kinships, unexpected movements, uncertainty, enrichment, and wildness as opportunities to feel queer, to signify pluralistically rather than "monolithically" (Sedgwick, 1993/1994, p. 8). The bodily, vestimentary, attitudinal, behavioural, and spatial boundaries I have examined, in turn, point to other boundaries, such as private/public and civilised/wild; such juxtapositions,

where they are destabilised, also illustrate that dreads and delights of sideways growth are intricately linked. As implied by the open letters discussed in the Introduction, changing discursive ideas of childhood, adulthood, and growth that transgress conventional age boundaries are accompanied by anxiety in each conceptual area. However, the dread around sideways growth is matched and, occasionally surpassed, by the possibility of individual and collective delight in playing with age categories, whether through passing, cross-dressing, performative role play, playfulness, resistance, or release. Additionally, when the imperative pressure to grow up is coercive and dismisses individuals' interests and choices, one example is Woody and Gadget cross-dressing into versions of conventional adulthood in the *This Is England* cycle, dread is located in denials of sideways growth. Dread and delight are interlinked also for those who grow sideways under duress or for whom sideways growth is less easily accessible.

Further Areas of Study

My thesis lays the groundwork for a myriad of research possibilities: it can be utilised, and further developed, for other contexts, conceptual areas, and primary material. I focus on twenty-first century Britain as one cultural moment where growing sideways manifests, in some specific ways, as an emerging structure of feeling. However, as I noted in the Introduction, ideas of normative growth are also disrupted in other temporal and geographical contexts. For example, twenty-first century manifestations of growing sideways could usefully be examined in a comparative study of Western countries because some social, economic, and technological developments, such as youth unemployment and the increasing influence of social media, occur more widely, and some culturally influential representations are consumed across nation boundaries. Sweden offers a

fascinating comparison to Britain because these countries, connected through a friendship pact since 1654 (Judith Black, 1997, p. 7), have traded ideas and representations of growth previously, for example Ellen Key's *The Century of the Child* (1900), A. S. Neill's *The Problem Child* (1925), Bertrand Russell's *Education and the Social Order* (1932), A. A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* books (1926; 1928), and Astrid Lindgren's *Pippi Longstocking* novels (1946–1948) (see Malewski, 2009; Lundqvist, 1979). Twenty-first century Swedish society is more broadly influenced by feminism than British society, which may impact the quantity and qualities of representations of female sideways growth, and Swedish children's literature provides intriguing material, for example, in terms of play and passing. Exemplary are Karin Cyrén and Siri Ahmed Backström's picturebook *Vem hämtar vem?* (2014), which interrogates ideas of play and work through child and adult protagonists who playfully switch roles, and the work of David Wiberg, who passes as the protagonist Linnea (at sixteen and eighteen years old) of his novels *Dagboksanteckningar från ett källarhål* (2013) and *Vi ses i mörkret* (2016) in marketing material and full-length theatre performances. Twenty-first century America, whose participatory events A Camp and Camp Grounded provide interesting points of comparison with Camp Wildfire, is also a rich context for investigating ideas of sideways growth. Furthermore, it is important to expand perspectives on what constitutes normative and non-normative growth in different cultural contexts by exploring how ideas of growing up and growing sideways operate in non-Western cultures.

Other research possibilities concern conceptual areas and primary material. Within my chosen conceptual areas, there are numerous aspects worth investigating further. For example, facial and body hair are a fascinating aspect of appearance, especially through a feminist lens. Representations that mock hairy adult bodies in children's literature can challenge aetonormative power imbalances and signal conventional age boundaries around sexuality (see Joosen, 2018, ch. 3), and white Western beauty standards that require

women to resemble prepubescent children by removing their body hair perpetuate wider gendered power structures (see Lesnik-Oberstein, 2006; Holland, 2004, p. 59; Macdonald, 2006, pp. 66-69) that are reflected and subverted in cultural forms. For example, while Liam in *Cosmic* removes his body hair for a spray-on space suit and notes that "[a]pparently women do it to their own legs, and they don't even get to go to space afterwards!" (Boyce, 2008/2009, p. 230) and Woody and Gadget, alongside their cross-dressing, can grow and remove facial hair both as a way of conforming to and refusing conventional adulthood in the *This Is England* cycle, the character Saz in Bernadette Davis's television series *Some Girls* (2012-2014) needs to conform to gendered appearance rituals, against her family's religion, in order to achieve normative growth and sexual attractiveness: "I can't go on with my life another day being this hairy. I've got to shave! Right now!" (S1E3, 15:53). Pertinent representations that suggest more sideways potential for female characters include Timothy Knapman and David Tazzyman's picturebook *Eleanor's Eyebrows* (2013), wherein the girl protagonist first discards and then accepts her straggly eyebrows who, meanwhile, have been on adventures of their own. Wider cultural trends for natural body hair and dyed underarm hair (Hunt, 3 Oct. 2015, n.pag.) are also relevant. Queer theory, such as Louise Tondeur's theorisation of hair as "cross[ing] the cultural boundaries of the body, because it [. . .] cannot be fixed, [. . .] defamiliarizes, destabilizes, disidentifies and decentres" (2011, p. 371), could provide a springboard for conceptualising facial and body hair decisions as decisions to repeat and refuse performances that affect age boundaries alongside gender boundaries. After all, depending on its location on the body, body hair grows in all sorts of directions, down, up and, of course, sideways.

Within the conceptual area of play, the idea that playfulness can create child-adult communities that resist political climates or actively shape their surroundings, which I have explored through the *This Is England* cycle and *Framed*, could be developed by

considering activism as playful protest. Here, theorisations of play as a strategy that renders activism sustainable and engaging (Ehrenreich, 2008) and, to an extent, enacts the changes it seeks (Shepard, 2011), offer helpful starting points. Pertinent primary material includes the 2016 grassroots movement *Britain Is Not An Island*, which relied on crayon posters to campaign for a Remain Vote in the EU referendum; the 2017 Women's Marches and "Emergency Demo against Trump's #MuslimBan and UK Complicity", whose child and adult participants engaged in playful placard-making; and the movement of craftivism (see Corbett, 2017). The Women's March on London even advertised Project Play's event "Playing in Spite of Patriarchy: A Post-Women's March Workshop" (Haggerty, Garner, Gribben, & Davis, 2017) as a strategy of post-protest recovery and a source of energy for continued activism. A recent trend for activist children's literature is also worth analysing for manifestations of playful activism and shifts in aetonormative power structures. This trend is exemplified by Amnesty International's collection of short stories and poems *Here I Stand: Stories that Speak for Freedom* (2013), Michael Foreman's representation of the triumph of imagination in preventing a local bookshop being replaced by a superstore in his picturebook *The Little Bookshop and the Origami Army!* (2015), Elena Favilli and Francesca Cavallo's introduction to female role models in the form of bedtime stories in *Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls: 100 Tales of Extraordinary Women* (2016), Sally Nicholls's suffragette novel *Things a Bright Girl Can Do* (2017), Catherine Barter's novel *Troublemakers* (2017) about local politics and whistleblowing teenager Alena, and Chloe Coles's survey of activist strategies in a bid to prevent the closure of a bookshop branch in her novel *Bookshop Girl* (2018). The latter five texts additionally suggest a feminist dimenson for critical analysis.

Conceptual areas other than appearance, play, and space, that promise rich analyses include language, fandom, virtual reality, emotion/cognition, work, sexuality, consumption (in the sense of both food and consumerism), and time. Within the conceptual area of time,

ideas such as Griffiths' *wild time*, which is "motley and diverse, now slow as a slug now quick as a kingfisher [. . .] unpredictable, chancy and cheeky" (2006, p. 418) and cultural phenomena such as slow parenting, slow food, and slow education are worth exploring as challenges to normative ideas of time in the grand narrative of growth as linear and chrononormative. DIY culture – from home-made deodorants to using chestnuts as laundry detergent, and including the zero waste trend and the Tiny House movement – could offer intriguing links in this context, as it releases individual from mass produced and inflexible ways of capitalist production and consumption, and its schedules, while taking up individuals' time by requiring research and more hands-on engagement. New conceptual areas can also continue to develop concepts from my conceptual areas. For example, the concept of age-based passing can be applied to online identities through primary material such as Lottie Moggach's novel *Kiss Me First* (2013), in which teenagers pass for adults online, ostensibly to enable them to commit suicide without hurting their families and friends.

Similarly, much treasure awaits excavation in terms of primary material. Banksy's Dismaland (2015), which re-imagined Disneyland cynically for adults as a temporary "family theme park unsuitable for children" ("Banksy Dismaland Show Revealed at Weston's Tropicana", 20 Aug. 2015, n.pag.), could be examined both in comparison with Disneyland in terms of children's and adults' play (spaces), for example using Michael Sorkin's theorisation of Disneyland (1992), and in the context of other products for children that have been re-imagined ironically for adults. For example, the educational Ladybird books series continues as Jason Hazeley and Joel Morris's *Ladybirds for Grown-Ups* with texts such as *The Ladybird Book of the Mid-Life Crisis* (2015), and Enid Blyton's *Famous Five* series has re-emerged as Bruno Vincent's series *Enid Blyton for Grown-Ups*, including *Famous Five Go Parenting* (2016). Representations of iconic child characters in children's literature as adult characters, for example in Jacqueline Wilson's crossover

novel *My Mum Tracy Beaker* (2018), are also interesting in this context, in terms of whether their child and adult selves are strictly distinct or, also indebted to the emotional investment of previous readerships, reconciled. Another intriguing avenue is exploring whether twenty-first century representation of imaginary companions, alongside the wider trend for adults' play, take this type of imaginative play more seriously, reference commercial interest in play, and include adults to an unprecedented extent. Pertinent primary material for this discussion includes A. F. Harrold's children's book *The Imaginary* (2014), illustrated by Emily Gravett, which presents imaginary companions as a community in its own right, whose imaginary play with humans becomes work and (a) serious (business) as it is institutionalised through a job centre, "the Agency" (2014, p. 92); Chris O'Dowd and Nick Vincent Murphy's sitcom *Moone Boy* (2012–2015), and its literary sequels, in which the child protagonist's adult imaginary companion is part of a wider group of imaginary companions that can be ordered from a catalogue; and James Pilkington's short film *Sweet* (2010), which suggests that children and adults can form a play community with each other and a shared imaginary companion who, moreover, is able to assert her autonomy.

Research on growing sideways can be continued in numerous other ways. In my thesis, I have explored power structures around age with a focus on gender. Identity categories such as race, class, sexuality, and ability are also in urgent need of detailed attention as factors that affect possibilities of upwards and sideways growth. Furthermore, research is needed that, enabled to do so by my groundwork, more particularly and comprehensively examines gender or age categories such as adolescence and old age. Research into growing sideways can also be advanced through other methodologies, on their own or in combination with close readings of primary texts. For example, autoethnographic enquiry into participatory play events, and semi-structured oral history interviews could build an affective archive of how growing sideways, as a structure of

feeling, is experienced individually and collectively. I am hopeful that the study of sideways growth will continue and diversify and, in the process, trouble age and other boundaries, pluralise performances, pinpoint limitations, disorientate other aspects of the grand narrative of growth, and identify more and new wildnesses and wildernesses.

Keeping the Kaleidoscopes Turning

Normative and alternative discourses of growth are worth our study and attention, for how we conceptualise growth shapes both possibilities and limitations of how we let ourselves and others grow. Growing sideways is a significant and political act as well as an emerging, alternative structure of feeling in twenty-first century Britain. Paying academic attention to sideways growth across cultural contexts is important because it provides insights into individual, collective, and national ways of feelings and identities, as well as identifying coercive power structures. As the century unfolds, studying sideways growth may provide an answer to Key's unspoken question when she declared the twentieth century that of the child: what ideas of growth and age categories will prevail in the twenty-first century? Alongside being political, growing sideways is also personal. Exploring sideways growth is fundamental to fictional characters and to participants of events in my research corpus, for it contributes to their individual and collective physical, emotional, and intellectual resilience, survival, disorientation, and enrichment, and enables them to experiment, giddily and vitally, with agefluid identities. Furthermore, growing sideways is personal to myself. It began as an endeavour to structure a feeling and has become a manifesto to keep your eyes open above sea level and underwater, to make choices especially where convention and familiarity obscure their existence, and to keep playing with age boundaries.

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